A SCIENTIFIC FRONTIER.

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OR,

THE DANGER OF A RUSSIAN INVASION OF INDIA.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE apprehension of a Russian invasion of India through her north-west frontier has long been a source of anxiety to the British Government, and that feeling has been growing in intensity as the conquests of the Czar pushed the borders of the Russian Empire nearer and nearer to those of our neighbours, the Afghans. Under these circumstances our policy towards Afghanistan has been prompted chiefly by the consideration as to what line of action would best protect us from the apprehended danger.

When the annexation of the Punjab carried our frontier to the foot of the mountains which form the eastern boundary of Afghanistan, Lord Dalhousie, referring to the prevailing fear of an eventual attack from Russia, declared in a Minute, dated the 30th April 1855:—"The treaty gives to the Government of India on its western frontier as complete security

against a foreign and distant enemy as it is possible for us in the nature of things to encompass."

This sense of security was inspired by the barren and difficult nature of the country which an army, entering Afghanistan from the north, would have to traverse before it reached India; and by the character of the Afghan tribes, a knowledge of which we had acquired during our invasion in 1838–42.

In 1867 certain opinions found expression in military circles to the effect that our means of successfully encountering a Russian advance would be greatly improved if we held advanced posts in Afghanistan, whence we could meet our northern foe at a distance from the Indian frontier. These opinions, however, as soon as they were promulgated, were pronounced by high authorities to be fundamentally wrong; but the scheme had meanwhile found favour with members of the Cabinet, and has ever since been the subject of much discussion and of controversy between the political parties in Parliament.

It is proposed in the following pages to review, in the light of the events of the last fifty years, the main arguments adduced on each side.

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CHAPTER I.

General Remarks on the Afghan War of 1878–80.

The policy towards Afghanistan, which was initiated by the Beaconsfield-Salisbury Cabinet in 1876, and resulted in the unfortunate war of 1878–80, was declared, in the enigmatic language of the Prime Minister, to have for its object the acquisition of a "scientific frontier"; that is, a frontier which could be defended at a considerably smaller cost than the boundary we actually possessed on the north-west of India. "So far as the invasion of India in that

quarter is concerned," said his Lordship, "it is the opinion of Her Majesty's Government that it is hardly practicable. The base of operations of any possible foe is so remote, the communications are so difficult, the aspect of the country so forbidding, that we have long arrived at the opinion that an invasion of our Empire by passing the mountains which form our north-western frontier is one which we need not dread."—(*Speech on Lord Mayor's Day*, 1878.) On the same occasion, however, Lord Beaconsfield added: "I should be sorry if you believed that it was the opinion of Her Majesty's Government that an invasion of India was impracticable. If the Euphrates valley were in the possession of a very powerful State, an adequate force might march through the passes of the Asian mountains, through Persia, and absolutely menace the empire of the Queen."

These two statements are manifestly irreconcilable, and the speaker's intention would seem to have been to keep the public as much in the dark as possible on the actual line of action to which the nation was being committed, a surmise which is fully confirmed by the fact that the papers laid before Parliament, and the oral declarations of the Government touching our relations with Afghanistan throughout the period in question, were of a remarkably misleading cha-

racter. Indeed, Lord Wolseley's sentence, quoted in the *Times* of 4th February last, in reference to the magazine rifle question, might well be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the instance just alluded to, viz. :—"One of the most serious complaints that can be brought against our system of government, as it bears on the army, is that we do not tell the truth to the English people."

It, however, soon became evident that the scheme of the Cabinet in 1876 aimed at our military occupation of Candahar and Herat as a menace to Russia, with whom our relations had become excessively strained during the Russo-Turkish War. The Amir was pressed to co-operate in that movement against Russia, and, on his refusing to commit himself to such a course, three armies were sent to invade his territories and forcibly put the scheme into execution. Meanwhile, the Treaty of Berlin had placed our relations with Russia once more on a friendly footing. The scheme, nevertheless, was persisted in, perhaps in view of future eventualities, but chiefly, no doubt, in order to punish the Amir for withholding his co-operation, and also because the occupation of Candahar and Herat was the main feature in a secretly cherished plan which had some years before commended itself to certain members of the Cabinet

taking place there between the British and the Russians, the sympathies of the inhabitants would be with the party who had previously abstained from interfering in their affairs, and from whom they would, therefore, have less reason to fear any ulterior design against their rude but much cherished and ancient independence.

Such have been the opinions expressed by all the Governors-General and Commanders-in-Chief who were entrusted with the safety of our Indian Empire, ever since our territory became conterminous with the mountainous regions generally known as Afghanistan. Accordingly, when the Government of India were consulted regarding the plan in favour of our holding advanced posts in those regions, their reply contained the following passage which clearly sets forth the grounds of their objection :—

"We think it impolitic and unwise to decrease any of the difficulties which would be entailed on Russia, if that country seriously thought of invading India, as we certainly should decrease them if we left our frontier and met her half-way in a difficult country, and possibly in the midst of a hostile and exasperated population. We foresee no limit to the expenditure which such a move might require. Should Russia ever think of invading India, our true policy,

our strongest security, would be found to lie in previous abstinence from entanglements, either at Cabul or Candahar or any similar outpost, and in full reliance on a compact army within our territories or on our border."

That opinion, moreover, was emphatically endorsed by Sir Frederick Roberts, who, with the experience acquired in the war of 1878–80, wrote from Cabul on the 29th May of the latter year :—

"The longer and more difficult the line of communication is, the more numerous and greater the obstacles which Russia would have to overcome ; and, so far from shortening one mile of the road, I would let the web of difficulties extend to the very mouth of the Khyber Pass. . . . We have nothing to fear from Afghanistan, and the best thing to do is to leave it as much as possible to itself. It may not be flattering to our *amour propre*, but I feel sure that I am right when I say that the less the Afghans see of us, the less they will dislike us. Should Russia in future years attempt to conquer Afghanistan or invade India through it, we should have a better chance of attaching the Afghans to our interests if we avoid all interference with them in the meantime."

These are facts which deserve special attention at the present moment, seeing that we are once more

on the eve of serious complications on the north-west frontier of India. When we look back at the incidents of the last fifty years, and more especially at the two epochs in our history when an irrational fear of invasion from Russia drove us to unprovoked hostilities against our neighbours—hostilities which resulted in signal disasters to our armies, and in great discontent among our Indian subjects, whom we burdened with the cost of our unsuccessful enterprises; when we consider the serious consequences of the errors committed on those two occasions, it becomes a matter for surprise as well as for deep concern, that a policy which nothing has justified should at the present moment be actively pursued in India, with the certainty of its soon landing us into fresh complications and the hazards of a third Afghan campaign. The policy of 1876, abandoned in 1880, when Sir Frederick Roberts proclaimed its unsoundness in the letter quoted above, was suddenly revived in 1885 under the scare produced by the Russian onslaught at Penjdeh, and while public attention at home was engrossed in heated political strife regarding Ireland; and many millions have already been expended upon railroads and other works intended to facilitate the march of our troops to Candahar and Cabul.

The strategic advantage which the advocates of that mistaken policy look for, from our holding outposts in Afghanistan, whence our troops could march against a Russian advance, would be entirely neutralized by the difficult nature of the country, the distance of our main resources, and the hostility and fanaticism which our occupation of Candahar and other outposts would arouse among every tribe in the country. The railroad we are constructing to Candahar, and our projected line towards Cabul, could afford little or no assistance to our troops, after they had penetrated the mountainous tracts beyond those cities; yet, can we forget how our armies were harassed, and their movements impeded, by the action even of tribes denying allegiance to the Amir, against whom personally we had declared war? Those tribes were actuated solely by religious fanaticism and hatred of foreign domination; and how powerfully their action contributed to the complete failure of our two expeditions in 1878–80 should be most carefully remembered, if we are to avoid similar disasters in future.

CHAPTER II.

Operations in Southern Afghanistan in 1878-79.

When a British army of 13,000 men was sent *viâ* Quetta to Candahar in November 1878, the object was to advance on Herat with the co-operation of the two armies of 16,000 and 6,000 men respectively, which entered Afghanistan at the same time through the Khyber Pass and the Kuram Valley. The Candahar column, upon entering the enemy's country, found the greatest difficulty in procuring food; and, that difficulty soon proving insurmountable, our troops had to retrace their steps, and the greater part of them to return to India, leaving only 4,000 men to hold Candahar. Under these circumstances the advance on Herat, which was the main feature in our plan of campaign, became impossible, and had to be given up.

Meanwhile the Khyber army had reached Jellalabad, and the Kuram force occupied the Peiwar Kotal, on their respective lines of advance towards Cabul. As their mission was to co-operate with the army in the south in the projected march to Herat, the collapse at Candahar rendered their further operations purposeless. The Kuram force, moreover, was stopped in its march by the Shutargardan, which is impracticable in winter, and our general situation thereupon became highly embarrassing. Meanwhile the enemy, avoiding, as a rule, any general action, seized every opportunity of attacking our convoys and detached parties; while cholera, typhoid, and the hand of the assassin were doing their destructive work among our soldiers, and our commissariat and transport difficulties were increasing daily. This untoward state of things made it urgent for our armies to leave the country with the least possible delay;* and the

* The situation is thus referred to in a despatch to the Secretary of State (C. 2401, 1879, page 33): "In the meanwhile the suspended activity of our troops on the Khyber line had begun to exercise a very prejudicial influence upon our political, as well as our military, position in Afghanistan. The result was . . . a recrudescence of petty but vexatious and harassing attacks from the surrounding tribes. . . . At the same time the increasing heat of the weather, and the defective sanitary conditions of Jellalabad, had begun to tell injuriously on the health of the large force concentrated in that locality, and due regard to the well-being of our troops necessitated an immediate change of quarters."

Government accordingly, within five weeks of our entering Candahar, made overtures to Yakub Khan, then Governor of Cabul, expressing a desire to settle amicably the differences which had led to the war.*

This disappointing result of the scheme in search of a "scientific frontier" was carefully concealed from the public, and Lord Beaconsfield, at the opening of Parliament on the 13th February 1879, represented the situation in the following delusive terms:—

"H.M.'s Government have the satisfaction of feeling that the object of their interference in that country has been completely accomplished. We are now in possession of the three great highways which connect Afghanistan with India . . . and I hope that this country will remain in possession of those three great highways (*Ministerial cheers*). We have secured the object for which the expedition was

* The papers presented to Parliament make it appear as if the overtures of peace had come from Yakub Khan. This false impression, produced by Lord Lytton's letter of 27th March, and the suppression of our Political Officer's despatch, to which Yakub's missive of 20th February was an answer, will be removed by a reference to Afghanistan Paper No. 7 (C. 2401 of 1879). Besides, Major Cavagnari's telegram of 28th February clearly states: "Letter affords favourable opportunity for opening negotiations with Yakub Khan."

undertaken. We have secured that frontier which will, I hope, render our Empire invulnerable."

At the very time when this inspiriting picture was being held up to the nation, the Government were endeavouring to negotiate a treaty of peace, by which they eventually agreed to evacuate Candahar, Jellalabad, and every other part of Afghan territory then occupied by our troops, excepting the districts of Kuram, Pishin, and Sibi, and to pay an annual subsidy of six lakhs of rupees to the Amir, who, on his side, agreed to a British Representative residing at Cabul. Thus two of those "great highways," the possession of which was declared to have been "the object of the expedition," and was to "render our Empire invulnerable," were being quietly surrendered; while the third route through the Kuram Valley is not a highway at all suitable for an army, seeing that it is closed in winter, and that our force under General Roberts was actually shut up in it at the very time when it was being represented in the misleading and grandiloquent terms just quoted. Doubtless the speaker relied on the ignorance of his hearers regarding the frontier he so vaguely defined, and regarding also the nature of the operations that had been carried on in Afghanistan. Indeed, on the latter point the public had scarcely any reliable

information until the conclusion of the war, when the diaries of officers attached to our forces were published under various forms. The information which these publications afforded was, for obvious reasons, incomplete, and, on some important points, vaguely and even ambiguously expressed. Nevertheless, the diaries in question clearly establish the ominous fact that, in spite of the valour and endurance displayed by our soldiers, and the ability and energy of our generals and many of the subordinate officers, difficulties arose at every step, from the nature of the country and the character of the foe, which hindered the movement of our troops, and effectually prevented them from accomplishing the object of the expedition. As those diaries, however, appeared only after the anxiety created by the war had subsided, and the angry feelings of the nation had been somewhat allayed by the overthrow of the Ministers responsible for the disastrous enterprise, the publications did not receive all the attention they deserve. A few extracts from them may therefore prove of interest, showing, as they do, that the climate, the configuration and barrenness of the land, and the fanaticism of the people constituted obstacles against which the perfection of our weapons, the discipline of our troops,

and the scientific contrivances at our command often proved totally unavailing.

Before submitting the extracts just referred to, it might be as well to conclude the remarks which suggest themselves with regard to the overtures of peace made by us in February 1879. Shortly after receiving Yakub Khan's letter of the 20th of that month, our Government was informed that the Amir Sher Ali had died in Turkestan, and that Yakub Khan was proclaimed his successor. The country, by that time, was in a state of anarchy, and Yakub scarcely exercised any power or influence over the people or their leaders. Under those circumstances he was glad of an opportunity of coming to terms with us, and a treaty of peace was accordingly concluded at Gandamak on the 26th May, by which we agreed, as already mentioned, to evacuate every part of the Afghan territory except Kuram, Pishin, and Sibi, and to pay an annual subsidy to the Amir, who, on his side, agreed to a British Representative residing at Cabul.

That treaty, by which the British Government virtually gave up all that it had contended for, and gained nothing substantial except the termination of the hostilities, aptly illustrates the very critical position in which it was placed. In short, the treaty was

the best arrangement that could be devised for covering our failure; and an examination of the apparent concessions we obtained under it, will show those concessions to have been utterly worthless. Of the three districts which we were not called to evacuate, Pishin and Sibi are wild tracts of barren land, the former having no defined boundary and the latter bordering on the arid plains of Beluchistan. Their soil is too poor to bear the cost of civil administration even in the most elementary form; and the Amir has consequently never maintained any permanent representative on the spot. Dr. Duke, in his *Recollections of the Cabul Campaign of* 1879–80, says: "Of all the horrible stations to be met with on our frontier, Sibi must bear the palm." As regards Pishin, an officer attached to the Candahar column described it as "an isolated position so destitute of food and water that a single native cavalry regiment could not subsist on its resources."*

Kuram is a winding valley in the midst of high mountains inhabited by some of the most turbulent tribes in Afghanistan, over whom the Amir himself exercises but little control. It has an issue towards Cabul through a very narrow rocky defile, of which

* *The War in Afghanistan: Its Origin and Results.* By Lieut.-Col. R. D. Osborn. (H. J. Infield, 1880.)

Wylde, in his notes on the map of Afghanistan, observes:—"One of our best frontier soldiers states that it is impossible to conceive a worse pass for an army." The pass is blocked with snow in winter—in short, the Kuram valley is a veritable *cul-de-sac*, in which an invading army, which persisted in holding the place, might be shut in, starved, and destroyed.

Lastly, as regards the clause providing for a British Representative to reside at Cabul, it was well known at the time that the Amir had not the power of protecting our Envoy from the hatred and fanaticism of his subjects. The late Amir, Sher Ali, had repeatedly told us, in most earnest language, that he could not guarantee the safety of British officers in Cabul, so bitter was the remembrance in the minds of the people of the outrages which our army had committed in that city in 1842. Since then we had many convincing proofs that a similar feeling prevailed throughout the country; and when Afghans have been questioned and remonstrated with on the subject, their reply has been to the following effect:—

"Sir Alexander Burnes, your Envoy in 1838, was received as the friend of the nation; there was not a house in our country the door of which was closed to him. He departed, and when next we saw him he was at the head of an army coming to dethrone his

friend, Dost Mahomed, and destroy our independence. Can we trust you after that?"

If the safety of a British officer in Cabul could not be guaranteed in the reign of Sher Ali, by whom the tribes of Afghanistan were brought under better control than they had ever been, it was worse than folly, it was a crime, to entrust the life of a British Envoy to the weak hands of Yakub Khan, at a time of anarchy, and when the fanaticism and exasperation of the people had been aroused in the highest degree by our unprovoked invasion of their country.* The massacre of our Envoy and of his entire escort on the 3rd September occurred within six weeks of their arrival in Cabul, and with that deplorable event the first chapter in the history of the war of 1878–80 may be said to have closed.

* Lieut.-Col. Osborn thus explains the urgent necessity under which the *Envoy clause* was inserted: "The Government dared not face the country with nothing to show as the fruits of a wicked and unrighteous war except a miserable and transparent imposition such as the 'Scientific Frontier.'"

CHAPTER III.

Extracts from Major Le Messurier's Book.

The following extracts from the diary of the Brigade Major attached to the Candahar column* relate to the operations carried on in Southern Afghanistan from the commencement of the war until the massacre of the British Embassy at Cabul:—

Extracts.

"1878, *Dec.* 22*nd.*—A sergeant of the 70th was stabbed by a Pathan.

"1879, *Jan.* 10*th.*—The prices we have to pay are startling; the forage for a horse costs 2 rupees a-day. . . . The Commissariat has only four days' supply for Europeans and seven for natives, and yet

* *Kandahar in* 1879. By Major A. Le Messurier, R.E. (W. H. Allen & Co.)

there are only some 8,000 fighting men at Candahar out of the 13,000 men which form the Quetta army. . . . As St. John was riding in the city to-day a fanatic fired a pistol at him, but without evil results. Very much at the same time Lieut. Willis, R.A., while standing at a shop, was stabbed over the right nipple (*he died on the 15th*) by another fanatic, who at once ran a tilt, wounding three of our soldiers before he was cut down. Jerome, when out surveying, was more than once insolently hustled by men in uniform who were squatting in the village.

"*Jan. 25th.*—Analysing the table of the Candahar force, the result is that, for every fighting man you must have one follower and one camel. This may seem an over-estimate, but it is not so; for the followers are not in excess and the camels are known to be deficient. The mortality among the beasts of burden is very great. From calculations roughly made, I do not hesitate to fix it at 40 per cent. per month; and should any bad or severe weather occur, it will be still greater. This means that, if we have 12,000 camels at work, others must be coming at the rate of 1,500 a week. This deficiency cannot altogether be met locally, and India must be looked to for support, remembering at the same time that the further we go the larger will be the number to be despatched

to cover the losses among the relief camels themselves.

"*On the Way to Robat.*

"The shoe begins to pinch, and the want of camel-carriage, added to the fact that we have outstripped our convoys of provision, is forcing itself to the notice of all.

"*Jan.* 17*th.*—Marched to Okhoond Ziarat. A biting cold wind blowing all day. The camels have suffered; 200 are reported to have died; also 60 of the cavalry brigade.

"18*th.*—Marched 12 miles to Shahr-i-Safa. The water all along is very brackish and strongly impregnated with nitre.

"21*st.*—Marched to a point opposite Pulsingi. A trooper of Oliver's was shot to-day by marauders. On this march we cross the boundary between the Durani and Ghilzai territories.

"24*th.*—Provisions not easily obtainable, and a reconnoitring (*raiding* ?) party was ordered off towards Mirzan, viz. 2 guns 11.11 R.A., 100 sabres 15th Hussars, a squadron of the 19th Bengal Lancers, and a detachment of Sappers. . . . The mail is reported uncertain and unsafe; our men are stopped and stripped and flogged, and sometimes killed.

"29*th*.—Thermometer 25°. Increased mortality among camels. No more tobacco.

"*Feb*. 2*nd*.—We have turned back our steps towards Candahar, and marched 15 miles against a cutting wind loaded with fine dust: miserable work, and one and all more or less in the dumps. Brown, our political officer, is hand-and-glove with the Ghilzais. Whatever influence he may have over them must wane when they see our force quietly leaving the valley and returning to Candahar after accomplishing so little.

"4*th*.—The Commissariat are out of wood; camels are dying off.

"7*th*.—Black frost last night; increased mortality among the camels continues.

"12*th*.—Rumours of a division of forces, some going back to India, now confirmed. The bread we have been having, and the water combined, will probably account for the sickness.

"*March* 4*th*.—In the march to Khelat-i-Ghilzai 267 camels started with the Head-quarters camp and 154 died in eight days.

"*April* 6*th*.—The transport officers are complaining dreadfully of the state of the road beyond Sharandaru Kotal. . . . The stench from the dead camels along the line was scarcely bearable. Around the

camp at Mand-i-Hissar are some forty dead camels unburied. . . . They tell me that, among the camels that manage to get in with their loads, about half the number cannot get on their legs in the morning and are left to die. Poor beasts! What a tale they could tell! Will the broad hint of their dead carcasses have any effect on our future campaigns?

"24*th*.—Rode back into Candahar and heard of Colonel Fellowes' death. He was as fine a looking man as any of the Force, and most active.

"*May* 6*th*.—35 camels died out of 609 in one night, from eating a poisonous herb close to lake Lagowlee.

"11*th*.—Rode to Mahomed Shah's village to see how it should be destroyed. The village has given cover to the men who attacked Pittman's telegraph party when laying the line into Candahar.

"*June* 23*rd*.—One of the 60th sentries was shot at last night. We seem to be in for a lively time of it. The Colonel is laid up, and Rogers, Hawskin, and Oliver are all down with fever.

"*July* 14*th*.—Cholera has appeared, ending fatally in 14 cases. 17*th*.—Cholera still busy at Headquarters and the two squadrons. 18*th*.—A telegram came in saying that Nicholetts was dead, having

been seized with cholera at 1 P.M. and died at 6 P.M. 21*st.*—Hannel of the 1st Punjab Cavalry died of cholera. 29*th.*—Captain Chisholme of the 59th buried to day. *August* 6*th.*—Major Powis of the 59th was buried this evening—cholera. Anderson of the 25th N.I., who has been been ill for some time, has been buried to-day: our doctor in the Sappers died last night; also Corporal Boon, R.E. 23*rd.*—Heard that Stavely lost 4 Europeans and 2 natives out of his battery, that Dr. Blanchard had died at Gatur, and Lieutenant Campbell of the Beluchis at Chaman, all of cholera. 31*st.*—Brown, commanding Sappers and Miners, had 6 cases of cholera, 5 of which were fatal.

"*Sept.* 6*th.*—The order to stand fast has reference to Cabul, where our Envoy and Suite have all been murdered.

"13*th.*—The troops which left on the 1st September returned to Candahar. Robberies are again on the increase. 17*th.*—Warning issued to all to be careful and not go near the city during the Eed festival.

"*Oct.* 2*nd.*—Lieutenant Kinloch, on his way to join his regiment, the 12th Bengal Cavalry, was murdered on the road between Chappri and Mantui."

These extracts show how great were the straits to which the Candahar column was reduced soon after entering Afghanistan, and how imperative was the necessity which compelled the General to send the greater part of the force back to India. When that significant retrograde movement took place, and the Kuram force was, at the same time, stopped by the Shutargardan from either advancing on Cabul or forming a junction with the Khyber army, a situation ensued which renders quite intelligible the early desire suddenly manifested by the British Cabinet to conclude peace on the best terms that could be obtained.

CHAPTER IV.

Extracts from Major Colquhoun's Book.

The extracts which will now be given are from the diary of an officer* attached to the Kuram army; they relate, therefore, to operations quite distinct from those in the south, referred to in Major Le Messurier's volume. As these extracts are made for the sole purpose of illustrating the causes which contributed to the failure of the expedition, they afford no adequate idea of the merit of Major Colquhoun's book, which is full of valuable information, and graphically describes the operations of the force to which he belonged.

* *With the Kuram Field Force*, 1878-79. By Major J. A. S. Colquhoun, R.A., dedicated to Sir F. Roberts, by permission. (W. H. Allen & Co. 1881.

EXTRACTS.

"1878. *Dec.* 15*th.*—The Government has directed that native troops and public followers will be, when employed beyond the British territory, entitled to their rations. This is equivalent to raising the pay of the native army about 30 per cent.

"*Nov.* 28*th.*—(Kuram Fort.) The regiments for the advance started at 6 A.M. The left column were sent with instructions to seize the village of Turai. . . . Orders were sent to the right brigade to march up the regular road to the Peiwar Kotal, thus forming a support to the attack of the left. . . . As soon as the head of the left column found itself in the narrow passage that closes the entrance to the 'Punch bowl,' they came in sight of the Afghans, who showed themselves on the crest of the mountain high above their heads. Nothing, however, could be done in this direction; the high precipitous mountains rising up straight from the ravine seem to bar the way, . . . the only thing to be done was to fall back on the village of Turai. This retrograde movement excited the Afghans, . . . a party of them moved down, and commenced an attack on the regiments as they were moving towards the village, . . . a smart

skirmish ensued. A wing of the 5th Punjab Infantry, under Captain Hall, was posted on a knoll of the spur. The 29th Punjab Infantry climbed the steep face of the hill, till the difficulty of the ground prevented their ascending any further. The two mountain guns, under Lieut. Jarvis, fired shells at the enemy; but as most of the Afghans were behind shelter-trenches and tree-stems, not much damage resulted. . . . The right column arrived at Turai at 2 P.M., and the Major-General and staff came up at the same time. . . . The regiments engaged with the Afghans were recalled, while, to assist the retreat, the 5th Goorkhas were ordered up from the right brigade, and the line was then withdrawn by alternate regiments.

"The arms were piled and the troops were resting on the ground, awaiting the arrival of their baggage, when, at 4 P.M., the Afghan gun, which had meanwhile been brought to the point of the spur overlooking the village of Turai, came into play at a range of 1,700 yards right on to the ground where the troops were to have camped, and which was covered with men. . . . The guns of the F/A R.H.A., were brought at once into action. . . . The winter day was shortening; the order was given to move the camp back, and it was nearly dark

when the spot selected was reached. . . . It is a difficult matter to pitch a camp in the dark on a plain, and in this case the difficulty was increased by having to pitch tents in a scrub-jungle amid a scattered growth of hill-oak and thorny bushes. . . . This broken ground extended for three and a half miles. The eagerness of the Afghans to commence hostilities was the salvation of the force. If, knowing the range as they did, and being in an inaccessible position, they had been content to wait till the camp was pitched, and had commenced to shell the camp with all their mountain guns after dark, the consequences would have been most serious. Nothing could have been done except to withdraw from the camp; but in all probability there would have been a stampede among the mules. The camp, with all its bedding and baggage, might have been burnt down, and the Kuram Field Force had been rendered *hors de combat.*

"The retrograde movement was most annoying, as the troops had been on foot since early dawn, and on the move all day; and just as they were on the point of enjoying their well-earned rest, they had to retire for over a mile.

"*Nov. 29th.*—Owing to the exhaustion of the men and cattle, and the impossibility of keeping up the

supplies with the troops, it was decided not to attack to-day.

"*Dec.* 1*st.*—The force remained in the same camp till this evening.

"*Dec.* 2*nd.*—The camp fires were burning brightly when, at 10 o'clock last night, the troops, who had been warned, formed up in the dark as quietly as possible. The secret had been well kept. . . . It was very dark. . . . The orders were that every regiment should be followed by its ammunition mules and hospital doolies and dandies. . . . Baggage animals on a narrow road hinder the traffic very completely in the day-time, and at night, of course, the delays occasioned are much greater. . . . The object of starting as early as 10 P.M. was to allow time for the troops to rest on the road; but the experience of the first part of the march showed that there was hardly time to do the remaining six miles . . . and unless the place were stormed in the early morning, the whole of the night's labour would have been lost. The cold began to be felt more as the night progressed . . . the mounted officers felt it most. The difficulty of maintaining touch in the dark between regiments was very great, especially with the intervening mules and hospital equipment. At the turn of the road the 2nd Punjab Infantry lost their way

. . . the regiment in the rear, the 23rd Pioneers, and the four guns of the Royal Artillery that followed the column on elephants, being behind the 2nd Punjab Infantry, naturally went astray also. . . .

"After having advanced slowly for a mile and a half, the report of a gun was heard, immediately followed by another discharge. Colonel Gordon halted the advance party, and endeavoured to find out the men who had fired . . . but no one could, or would, identify them . . . a native officer took several men's rifles and smelt them. He soon found out the men who had fired, but, being a Mahomedan, he tried to screen his co-religionists. There is little doubt that some of the Pathans of this regiment (29th Punjab Infantry) were imbued with the idea that they should not fight against their neighbours the Afghans, as they were of the same religion, and thus these shots were fired with the view of giving notice of the approach of the column. This view is confirmed by the behaviour of a party of men of the regiment, who, in the course of the subsequent engagement, made their way back to the camp, with the story that they had lost their way in the dark. . . . About 8 o'clock at night, after a time which seemed an age, a messenger reached the bivouac to

say that the 2nd Battalion 8th King's were in possession of the Peiwar Kotal.

"*Dec. 6th.*—The troops marched to Alikheyl. There was but little forage to be had, so the horses with the force fared badly. Only three guns and their ammunition wagons were brought up the hill; the task was a severe trial. As there was no forage on the Kotal, the horses and drivers were sent down the hill again to be attached to the two guns F/A R.H.A., and march back with them the next day to the camp at Kuram.

"*11th.*—No extra issue of food, on payment or otherwise, is henceforth to be allowed.

"*12th.*—The Major-General has decided to return to Kuram . . . the baggage of four regiments, even on the reduced scale, made a tolerably long column, and the commissariat camels added to the length to be protected.

"*13th.*—The tents were struck at 1 A.M.; the night was bitterly cold and dark. The track up the Kotal was excessively steep and difficult for the camels . . . there were slippery surfaces of ice which hindered the camels and delayed the march of the baggage. . . . The ascent had been troublesome to the camels, but the descent was infinitely more so, and it was with difficulty that these animals could be made to go

down the abrupt and slippery road. The gorge at the foot of the hill extended for five miles; the track for the first part ran through a deep ravine with perpendicular walls, which narrowed in places to but a few yards. . . . It would have been difficult to crown the heights on each side, as these in their turn were commanded by successive ridges, on all of which it would have been necessary to place troops. . . . Here and there side ravines broke into the road, in any one of which an ambush might have been conveniently laid; but we had got the start of the enemy, and it was not till the real difficulties of the road were passed that some inhabitants of the country were seen high up on the mountain-sides. . . . Before the tail of the column had extricated itself from the ravine, more of the people had collected . . . by degrees they closed as they advanced, and soon were fifty yards off the convoy. . . . Suddenly a volley was fired at the party. Capt. Goad fell wounded (he died on the 16th). All this while the column was advancing steadily, and the rear-guard was continually attacked by the more daring of the enemy, who swooped down in parties as the ground allowed them, while the rest kept up a fire from above. In one of these attacks Capt. Powell was wounded twice (he died soon afterwards). The head-quarters of the regiment (5th

Goorkhas) had reached the camp when the news of the attack came in; but by the time they arrived to the assistance of the rear-guard, the affair was over, and the enemy had retired into the mountains.

"14*th*.—Mr. Christie, Assistant Commissioner, was sent to inquire regarding the possibility of punishing the Mangals who made the attack. The result of the inquiries was that the Mangal villages were all scattered hamlets, and that the only one of any size was the chief village of the Laggi Glen, which was situated in a very difficult country. The intention (of punishing) was abandoned.

"15*th*.—D. O. 347, Sick and wounded to be transported from Kuram to Kohat under escort of the 5th Punjab Infantry. The hostile feeling of the hillmen showed itself by the nightly cutting of the telegraph wire.

"16*th*.—The necessity of husbanding the transport became apparent, as the camels were beginning to die. . . . The distance of the nearest hill where brushwood which would do for their food was found, was seven miles; and the camels had thus to walk fourteen miles, there and back, to their feeding-ground daily. The cold, added to the change of diet, was trying to their constitution, and the damage from these causes materially affected the movements of the

force. . . . Some of the Orakzai tribe fired into the cavalry post, killing a horse, and were assembling with the intention of attacking the force.

"18*th*.—A robbery occurred in the Kuram fort of the treasure belonging to the army.

"24*th*.—The hardly won Peiwar Kotal had to be retained at all costs during the winter months, to prevent its falling into the hands of an inimical tribe.

"*Khost Expedition.*

"1879, *Jan.* 6*th*.—Our camp was pitched to the east of the Fort of Matun at 2 P.M. Information was brought in at 7 that the Mangals had come down into the valley.

"7*th*.—In the morning the Mangals and other tribesmen began to swarm out of the villages. As the enemy seemed disposed to make an attack, the troops fell in at 9 A.M.; but were dismissed when the intention of the enemy became more evident, which was to make a simultaneous attack in every direction. By 12 o'clock the surrounding movement was completed, and the troops were ordered to fall in again. . . . On the arrival of the cavalry the enemy withdrew to the foot of the hills . . . the exchange of fire had been going on for half an hour when our infantry brought

a more effective fire on the ridge where the enemy were now collected. The Mangals then retired beyond the reach of pursuit, which was, however, not attempted, as nothing would have been gained by following the enemy into the recesses of the mountains. . . . The string of camels which had been seized (from our camp by the Mangals) and were being led away, were visible on the plain; but it would not have been possible, with the mass of men still hanging about, to attempt the recapture, without the risk of being cut off.

"12*th*.—Sick and wounded moved into fort.

"14*th*.—Disturbed all night by rumours that the Mangals intended attacking. Trenches were thrown up.

"16*th*.—No forage for camels: 400 sent back to Hazir Pir.

"18*th*.—Flour rations reduced from 1 to $\frac{3}{4}$ seer.

"21*st*.—Thermometer 17 deg. The cold and indifferent supply of water affected the health of the troops; intermittent fever, pneumonia, and dysentery began to show themselves.

"29*th*.—Cavalry vedettes sent out . . . the fort of Matun was emptied of all the powder and grain; but there were not many unladen camels . . . the powder was poured into the wet ditch, the grain that

could not be carried off was set alight. The task being over, there remained only two alternatives—either to fight the Mangals or to retire. The latter course was decided on; the enemy were in great force, and even if they had been driven back to the hills nothing would have been gained, as they could not have been pursued. The Mangals, emboldened by our seeming inactivity, ventured out and formed a line about a mile long towards the west. Had only the whole force been available, or had even our men been fresh to go out and do battle, and if we had been victorious, we would have done more towards the pacification of the independent tribes than any *patched-up money-bought peace*. A little before 12 the retirement began while the enemy were still at a distance.

"*Feb. 2nd.*—A convoy of sick men (including General Cobbe, who had sufficiently recovered from his wound) proceeded to India under escort. The detachment was ordered to march viâ the Durwaza Pass, as there was some chance that the Mangals might otherwise attack the party. The Peiwar Kotal was now virtually secure; the only place where trouble was expected was Thull, though it was *in our borders*.

"On the night of the 2nd March a raid was made

by the Alisherais and Mamuzais. . . . After killing five of our men and wounding seven, the raiders carried off 29 mules.

"*May 30th.*—Alikheyl.—The increasing heat appeared to be affecting the troops, and in consequence of several cases of erysipelas it was decided to move to Plateau A. The 67th Regiment at Byan Kheyl were also similarly affected, but suffered more from a severe form of typhoid.

"The General and Staff rode up the Lukkerai Pass for eighteen miles with the object of meeting Captain Strahan, R.E., and Major Stewart, Guides Corps, who were coming from Gandamak. After waiting for some time, the General had to return, as it was getting late, and afterwards it was telegraphed that these officers had been unable to cross the Pass.

"*June 3rd.*—The General and Staff went to the top of a spur. The idea was to proceed up the Hassan Kheyl valley till the Pass on the Ghazni road was reached; but the headmen of the Hassan Kheyls pointed out that part of this road lay through the Mangal territory, where opposition was likely to be met with. The idea was consequently abandoned . . . but the party was taken up a spur which overlooked the Pass. Not much time was allowed for making observations, as when the Mangals in the

valley below sighted the party on the ridge, their drums beat, alarm was given, and they began to collect with the object of fighting . . . so the party returned to camp.

"*June 6th.*—It was necessary to explore the Ishtiar Pass. The General started with a small force, and till the last moment the destination of the march was kept secret, and it was given out that the troops were to go through the Manjiar Pass, so that, if the Mangals thought of attacking, they would be on the wrong track. No opposition was met with. . . . The people of Keriah, however, used to creep up close and fire into the camp at night. . . . On the 15th June the last reconnaissance was to be made. . . . *Arrangements* were made with the Lajji Mangals *for security* on their part of the road. . . . Just before reaching the last village one of the Badragga (native escort) said that the Mangals would object to the advance of the party. . . . The General decided to make further inquiry before committing himself to the defile. . . . The road being reported as clear, the first Mangal village was reached and the road was resumed. About three miles from the border line a halt was called to find out the intentions of some men who were coming down to the side ravine. There were not many visible, only three or four, but

their actions were hostile. Prolonged shouts of Allah and occasional (war) dances showed that opposition was to be met with. About three miles further, the Ahmed Kheyl villages, which were the goal of the expedition, were in sight; but there was a chance of the return journey being cut off. The men on the hill-top were asked to come down and talk over the matter, but their reply was a shot. . . . About an hour passed in the fruitless endeavour to bring the Mangals to terms. . . . It was then reported that they were coming to take us in the rear. . . . The General gave the order for the return. . . . As soon as the enemy observed the movement they swarmed down and, skirmishing from rock to rock, returned our fire with interest. The party returned to camp at 4 P.M. On the 17th June the camp broke, and the General returned to Shabuzan. On the 18th, Lieutenant Whitall, a promising young officer attached to the Bengal Lancers, died from cholera at Badesh Kheyl. After his death the camp was removed to a higher table-land; the drawback there was the distance of the water-supply. On the 25th, Mr. Sinclair, Assistant Commissioner at Thull, and several civil subordinates who were in camp near him, were attacked with cholera. Mr. Sinclair died the following day. Dr. Smith, who was sent to Thull on

account of the cholera, was murdered at Chappri. The camp at Badesh Kheyl being a bare plateau, fatigue parties were sent daily to bring in fire-wood. Two parties of the 21st and 11th P. I. were set upon, and a Subadar (captain) and his orderly were killed.

"*July* 1*st*.—Head-quarters shifted to the Peiwar Kotal. The heat and moisture at Kuram were very relaxing . . . and the climate was beginning to affect the health of all.

"18*th*.—The head-quarters and the Cabul Mission (Envoy and suite) marched to Karatiga and proceeded on the 19th to the Afghan camp at Shutargardan. The General and Staff were allowed to go as far as the Pass. All political work in the Kuram valley thus terminated on the 20th July."

CHAPTER V.

Review of the Operations of the Kuram Field Force, and Summary of the Campaign of 1878–79.

It will be seen from the foregoing extracts that causes similar to those which produced the collapse at Candahar, contributed likewise to mar the operations of the Kuram Field Force. The transport and commissariat difficulties, notwithstanding the proximity of our base at Kohat, were sufficiently great to seriously impede the movements of our troops; while the obstacles due to the configuration of the land were somewhat greater than in the south; and sickness from climatic causes, as well as the hostility and fanaticism of the inhabitants were the same in both places.

The Kuram army, 6,000 strong, crossed the Afghan frontier, opposite Thull, on the 21st November 1878,

and marched to the Kuram fort, some forty-seven miles distant, without encountering opposition; but its further advance, on the 28th, was completely unsuccessful. It met the enemy in a defile, and had to fall back on the village of Turai; and, while waiting there for the baggage to pitch their camp, our troops were shelled from a spur overlooking their position, and had to beat a further retreat. Indeed, the Kuram force was in that instance saved from annihilation, as Major Colquhoun so clearly explains, only by the eagerness of the Afghans to commence hostilities.

The supplies had not come up, and our troops, who had been on the move ever since early dawn, were so exhausted that it was impossible to renew the attack the next day, and until the 2nd of December, when, after a whole night's march in order to effect a surprise, and a very hard day's fight, the enemy retreated and left us in possession of the Peiwar Kotal. Important as that action was in supporting the *prestige* of our arms, it nowise promoted the object of the expedition, seeing that our further advance towards Cabul was hopelessly arrested by the Shutargardan, and that we had to remain confined in the Kuram Valley throughout the remainder of the campaign. This period of enforced inactivity was partly employed on an excursion into the adjacent

country of Khost. The exploration of the Khost Valley was undertaken avowedly for the purpose of ascertaining how far its inhabitants could interfere with our communications; but in reality with a view to conquest and annexation, unaccountable as that might appear, but as the course which was actually pursued clearly indicates.

A force of 2,300 men entered the Khost country on the 3rd January 1879, and encamped on the 6th close to the fort of Matun, the residence of the Afghan governor. That official, having only some two hundred matchlockmen with him, could offer no resistance, and surrendered at discretion, giving up all the revenue records, stores, and ammunition which were in the fort. The Mangals, however, a powerful tribe inhabiting the neighbouring hills, threatened to expel us from the country, and accordingly surrounded our camp on the following day. Sharp fighting ensued, and ultimately the attack was repulsed; whereupon we seized all the grain found in the neighbouring villages, placed a garrison in the fort, and resumed our excursion on the 13th. The next day, on hearing that the Mangals were preparing to renew their attack, we hastened back to Matun, threw up intrenchments, and did all we could to put our camp in a state of defence. Our situation, looking at

the smallness of our force, and the absence of any support, was extremely precarious. Nevertheless, a durbar was held on the 25th, at which the head-men of the Khost villages were told that the British Government had taken the country under its protection, and appointed a Governor; that our regiments were about to depart, but that troops would always be within reach to quell disturbances, if necessary. Then, turning to the hillmen, who had also been invited to the durbar, the General told them that if they wanted to fight, we were always ready for them; but he advised them not to try, as we did not want to hurt them if they would only keep the peace. These speeches, so inconsistent with our actual situation, seem unaccountable, except on the hypothesis that they were a stratagem for getting out of a critical position, or were prompted under instructions framed in Downing Street. However that might be, the hollowness of the whole affair was soon exposed. Our troops had scarcely left the place on the 27th, when the General was overtaken by a messenger, and informed that the hillmen threatened to put our garrison and governor to death. It was then found that all we could do under the circumstances, was to relieve our garrison and governor, and finally evacuate the Khost country. Even this, however, we were not allowed to accom-

plish without suffering further humiliation. While our cavalry watched the movements of the enemy, we endeavoured to carry away the powder and grain left in the fort; but owing to the want of transport animals, the powder was poured into a ditch, the grain that could not be carried off was set on fire, and we beat a hasty retreat *while the enemy were still at a distance.* The narration of this unfortunate incident closes abruptly, in Major Colquhoun's book, with an allusion to "a patched-up, money-bought peace"; and it is a significant fact that the Parliamentary Return purporting to contain "*a Report of the Operations in the Khost Valley in January 1879,*" makes no mention of what occurred there after the 8th of that month, although it was ordered to be printed only on the 17th of March.

That Parliamentary Return, by confining its report to the attack repulsed on the 7th January, produced the impression that "*the operations in the Khost Valley in January* 1879" had been entirely successful; while, in fact, our troops had been compelled to evacuate the country in that very month, under circumstances which were the very reverse of a successful operation.

Frequent allusions to money payments and gifts to the enemy are found in the diaries kept during the

war, a circumstance which cannot fail to produce a painful impression on the reader. The responsibility in this respect must rest entirely on those who originated the expedition with inadequate means for accomplishing their object; whence situations ensued which rendered it imperative to resort to all available means for averting disaster.

It is true that the armies employed exceeded 100,000 men, including camp-followers; but the experience we had acquired of the country and of its inhabitants should have taught us that, even with such a force, our means were insufficient for the task that was undertaken. The ever-recurring necessity of sending out detached parties to collect food, to accompany the sick and wounded, to protect convoys, and to perform other duties away from head-quarters, materially diminished our forces and weakened their power for both attack and defence.

A review of the operations of the Kuram Field Force will show that, notwithstanding the hard-fought and successful action of the Peiwar Kotal, and the incessant work which fell to that small army, nothing whatever was accomplished by it that in any way promoted the object of the expedition. Similarly, the Khyber army of 16,000 fighting men, after conquering the opposition met with at Ali Masjid,

remained at Jellalabad, repelling the attacks of the Khughianis, Shinwaris, and other tribesmen, until the worthless treaty of Gandamak brought the campaign to an end.

Thus, three British armies, numbering some 50,000 fighting men (including the various reserves and the contingents supplied by Indian princes) were kept in the field in 1878 and 1879 without having achieved anything to compensate for the blood and treasure expended in pursuance of Lord Beaconsfield's enigmatic Afghan policy. Indeed, the very attempt to carry out that policy involved us not only in disasters and humiliations, but in a new war equally unsuccessful and unfortunate. This second war, entered upon for avenging the murder of our representative, terminated with our evacuating Afghanistan without any reparation having been made to us for the outrage of the 3rd of September, and under other conditions likewise most derogatory to the dignity of a great nation. The Herati regiments of the Amir, who, on entering Cabul in August, had publicly insulted our Envoy, and were afterwards the leaders and principal actors in the massacre, left Cabul as we approached that city, and it was beyond our power, owing to the nature of the country and the smallness of our army, to pursue and punish

them. We imposed a fine on the inhabitants of Cabul as abettors in the crime, but failed to recover any portion of that fine. We seized treasure in the city, but had to refund the amount, although it was prize-money belonging to our soldiers. We went farther still for obtaining a peaceful settlement; we paid ten lakhs of rupees from the Indian treasury to the new Amir, Abdarrhaman, although he persistently declined to meet us at Cabul, and superciliously ignored every proposal we made for coming to an arrangement which would spare our national susceptibilities. The policy which brought these disasters and humiliations on the nation, and which has burdened our Indian fellow-subjects with upwards of thirty millions of debt, is the policy which a fear of Russia, as irrational as it is unworthy, is at the present moment driving our Government to pursue in its relations with Afghanistan.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Howard Hensman's Letters, written during the Campaign of 1879–80.

The diaries which have been quoted in preceding pages relate to the war of 1878-79, which ended with the Treaty of Gandamak. The extracts which will now be given refer to the subsequent period extending from September 1879, when hostilities were resumed to avenge the death of our Envoy, to September 1880, when our troops were on their way back to India.

Extracts

From Mr. Howard Hensman's letters, published under the title of *The Afghan War of 1879–80*, preceded by a passage in Sir F. Roberts's letter

congratulating the author on the excellence of his work.

(These extracts, having been made for the special purpose already explained, can afford but a feeble idea of the merit of the work whence they have been taken.)

"1879. *Oct.* 20*th.*—To-day five prisoners, more or less directly concerned in the events of the last few weeks, were marched to execution. It has been no easy matter to collect evidence.

"23*rd.*—Yesterday two Rassaldars of the Afghan Cavalry were marched to execution. The city rabble is unpunished. The Herati regiments have escaped.

"*Nov.* 5*th.*—Five persons were hanged this morning; four of them were village head-men near Shutargardan, who were in our pay but played a double game.

"9*th.*—We are unhappy in our minds as to our line of communications. . . . We have been cut off again from the Khyber force for several days. . . . We are anxious to send our sick and wounded back to India before the full rigour of winter comes upon them here.

"12*th.*—A flying column was to have started on

the 15th, but it is probable that the expedition will now be postponed. It would involve great hardships to march troops 90 miles exposed to sleet and snow-storms; and, as the chief object would be to secure food and forage, other means may perhaps be found to gain the end in view.

"14*th*.—We regret that our cavalry should have to be sent back to the Jellalabad valley where forage is fairly plentiful; and yet what can we do?

"General Macpherson (who marched some days ago to meet the column expected from Peshawar) had no supplies, as everything is being gathered into Sherpur for the winter. On the 8th the force crossed to Nagloo, and bivouacked without tents. On the following day a reconnaissance was made . . . Some seventy Safis appeared and threatened to attack if we proceeded further. Lieutenant Smith returned to Nagloo. On the 10th a foraging party of one company of the 67th Foot, under Captain Poole, marched six miles west of Nagloo. A narrow defile had to be passed, and, a little further, a second defile. . . . Upon getting through this second defile Captain Poole saw, on the slope below, some 800 to 1,000 men, who immediately opened fire. . . . We returned the fire and checked the enemy, but observed some 400 Safis creeping round the hill with the evident inten-

tion of cutting off our retreat. Our position became so hazardous that Captain Poole ordered the men to fall back. . . . In the open our men began to drop . . . the fighting was so close that Captain Poole could not carry off his dead . . . he was struck by a bullet in the calf. . . A Sowar galloped to Nagloo for assistance. General Macpherson sent a squadron of the 12th Bengal Cavalry and four mountain guns; 150 of the 67th, and a company of the 28th Punjab Infantry following. The cavalry arrived at a trot, but the defile was so blocked with the baggage-animals, that to get through was impossible. The cavalry dismounted and went up the hill to use their carbines, and, the guns also arriving, went up to the crest under escort of the 28th and 1st company of the 67th, and opened fire at 1,000 yards. . . . The enemy retreated. The affair proves how great a risk small foraging parties run. The difficult ground put a body of infantry, encumbered with baggage-animals, at a great disadvantage. That one-sixth of Captain Poole's company was put out of action, is too significant to be lightly regarded.

"18*th*.—The Commission appointed to inquire into the circumstances of the massacre of our Envoy has completed its task, and to-day the report was signed by Colonel Macgregor, Dr. Bellew, and Mahomed

Hyat Khan. In due course Government will, no doubt, furnish a connected narrative of the events of the early part of September. (*No narrative has been published.*)

"21*st*.—We are only at Cabul, and it now seems beyond doubt that we shall not advance further this year. . . . Twenty degrees of frost have warned us that bivouacking would be nearly impossible for well-clad soldiers, and certain death to hundreds of camp-followers. . . . General Macpherson's brigade has been warned for service in the district of Maidan, where large supplies of grain and fodder are said to have been collected.

"24*th*.—General Baker has found much difficulty in inducing village head-men to bring in corn . . . several were very insolent. . . . One of them, Bahadur Khan, was obstinate. The cavalry were sent out yesterday to fetch him in by force . . . they were fired upon by a large body of men . . . it was decided to break up the tribal gathering before it grew to serious proportions. General Baker marched in command of a compact little column . . . news was volunteered by a village sirdar that Bahadur Khan and his followers had taken all their movable property and fled to the hills . . . it was soon seen that the place was quite deserted. . . . All Bahadur

Khan's villages were marked down to be looted and burnt. The houses were found stored with straw, firewood for the winter, and a small quantity of corn . . . orders were given to fire the villages, and destroy the houses and their contents.

"*December 1st.*—During the past few days reports have come in that the Kohistanis meditate attacking Sherpur.

"*4th.*—As it began to dawn on the minds of men that we were settling down for the winter, the hostility to our presence revived. In Turkestan it had never subsided. It is not surprising, therefore, that our attempts to open up communications with the Afghan Governors of the northern districts should have failed. . . . Of Herat we know nothing. The Proclamation of 28th October concluded as follows:—'*The services of such Chiefs as assist in preserving order will be duly recognised; but all disturbers of peace, and persons concerned in attacks upon the British authority, will meet with condign punishment. The British Government, after consulation with the principal tribal Chiefs, will declare its will as to the future permanent arrangement to be made for the good government of the people.*' Now, these stilted periods either mean a great deal or nothing at all. In Turkestan there are disturbers of the peace as there

are in Kohistan, Maidan, and Logar, and to be consistent we must fulfil our pledge to punish them condignly. But these disturbers have had no evidence of the British authority beyond the empty words of the Proclamation. . . . An authority to be respected must be tangible. . . . It is not tangible in Turkestan; and it is idle to expect a proclamation, or even a thousand, to cause provincial governors to submit to an authority which does not reach them. 'Consultation with tribal chiefs' is admirable from the view of closet politicians; but how if chiefs decline to consult? An attempt has been made to carry out the spirit of the Proclamation—to make permanent arrangements for the good of the people—by consulting such sirdars as have deemed it wise to come to us. From their number four have been chosen as governors of districts; but this system has been a failure. However much they may represent us, they are rejected by the people, and the three who have 'joined their appointments' have had a rough time of it. They have been worried and threatened. . . . In one case—that of Maidan—assassination has been added to threats. . . . From Charikar and Logar our Governors report that they are looked upon with disfavour, and even hated, and as they have no escorts, their lives may be considered in jeopardy.

"9*th*.—Yesterday a detachment under Brigadier-General Macpherson marched to Aoshahr. . . . Mahomed Jân has 5,000 men with him on the Ghazni road, and pressure has been brought by him to bear on the local villagers who were bringing in grain and fodder. In the Logar Valley our Governor has been defied, and supplies from that district have almost entirely ceased. The Ghilzais, Lughmanis, Shinwaris, and Afridis on our line of communications are still quiet, beyond cutting the telegraph-wire between Dakka and Jellalabad.

"11*th*.—The strategical move to disperse Mahomed Jân's force has had an unexpected result. The enemy has beaten us at our game; and, instead of Mahomed Jân being a fugitive, his standards are flying in sight of Cabul. The enemy advanced confidently, and our cavalry were obliged to fall back. . . . Later, the enemy broke, but entered the Chardah Valley. Though the shells from our four guns were pitched into the thick of the enemy, they never wavered, but came steadily on; and, as General Massey, commanding the Artillery, had no infantry with him, he was obliged to retire. Sir Frederick Roberts joined, and the cavalry were ordered to charge. The Lancers had to risk a heavy loss in the hope of saving the guns. The three bodies of

cavalry disappeared in a cloud of dust as they headed the masses of the enemy. . . . The riderless horses came galloping back, followed by scattered parties of troopers quite out of hand. They had been received with a terrific fire. . . . Men and horses went down in the *mêlée*, and, once down, there was but a faint chance of being rescued. When the dust cleared away, it was seen that the cavalry charge had made no impression upon the enemy, who were still advancing steadily, waving their knives and tulwars and carrying their banners more proudly than ever. The rally was sounded, and Colonel Macgregor and other officers collected the Lancers, while two guns advanced and re-opened fire. The squadron of the 14th Bengal Lancers, with Captain Gough's troop of the 9th, were still able to keep between the guns and the enemy, now only 1,000 yards off. . . . A second charge was ordered, but it was made in a half-hearted way, the country being of extraordinary difficulty for horses. . . . One of the guns stuck in a watercourse when the Artillery were retiring after the first cavalry charge. . . . Three other guns were got further on, but were stopped by a channel deeper than any yet crossed. They were spiked and left, and the drivers and gunners moved off with the cavalry, the villagers firing rapidly upon them. The

enemy came straight on, waving their knives, and put their faces towards Nanuchi Kotal, which leads to the western gate of our cantonments. In Sherpur an anxious afternoon was passed. . . . When the stragglers from the 9th Lancers and the F.A. Battery rode in, wounded, mud-splashed, and many without swords or lances, it was known that a serious action had taken place, and all troops in the cantonments were ordered to stand to their arms. Major Smith Windham, with half a dozen drivers, was the first officer to arrive, and when no guns followed him, and he reported them 'spiked and abandoned,' the anxiety was greatly increased.

"12*th*.—At 9 o'clock heliograph communication was opened with General Baker, who reported that his rear-guard had been harassed for the last two days, and that the hills in all directions were lined with tribesmen. He was ordered to march without delay to Sherpur, and reached in the evening, his troops foot-sore and tired.

"13*th*.—Hard fighting. A convoy of wounded sent from Sherdarwaza heights to Sherpur had a narrow escape.

"15*th*.—Yesterday the severest fight we have yet gone through took place on the Asmai heights and a lower conical hill adjoining them on the north.

To-day has been one of almost absolute quiet. Luckily, the telegraph remained open until five this morning; so full particulars of our condition were sent down the line. Our losses in yesterday's action were very severe. We shall probably leave Mahomed Jân to his occupation of Cabul until General Charles Gough arrives. What that occupation is likely to be we are already learning. The houses of all known friends of the British are being looted and destroyed.

"16*th*.—A second night has passed without a demonstration by Mahomed Jân against Sherpur. Our soldiers have had time to rest and not been obliged to stand out all night in the bitter cold. Four blankets per man have been served out. We are practically in a state of siege. Beyond defence we can do nothing. We are quietly accepting the humiliation of investment, and witnessing the looting of Cabul and the Bala Hissar without being able to strike a blow against the enemy.

"17*th*.—It is a heavy blow to our prestige to be forced into Sherpur after having ruled at Cabul for two months.

"18*th*.—(More fighting.) Snow began to fall at 7 o'clock this evening, and it is still snowing now at midnight. At 10 o'clock I visited the bastions

held by the 72nd Highlanders. The sentries in their great-coats were simply white figures standing rigidly up like ghosts, the snow-flakes covering them from head to foot and freezing as they fell. . . . In the ditch below our horses were tethered and our syces (grooms) and followers sleeping, the snow covering all alike and whitening the ground as far as the eye could reach.

"There was again to-day constant firing by the enemy. Our men do not answer except when certain of their aim, as one rifle discharge from the walls is the signal for twenty answering shots. A trooper of the 9th Lancers was badly hit in the chest. The bullet was from a Snider rifle, and must have travelled 1,500 yards. There have been so many bullets singing about that there was positive danger in walking from point to point. Our loss in officers is painfully great. The 9th Lancers have been the worst sufferers.

"20*th*.—Old Mushk-i-Alam continues to prophesy a repetition of the victory of 1841–42.

"21*st*.—News has been received to-day from General Hugh Gough, who will be here on the 24th with 1,400 men and four mountain guns.

"22*nd*.—We have been left almost undisturbed to-day. A message has been sent to General Charles

Gough ordering him to march to Sherpur without halting at Bhatkak.

"23*rd*.—After eight days' investment Mahomed Jân has made his attack upon Sherpur and has been beaten off. After five hours' skirmishing the enemy tried again to assault our lines; they were driven back. . . . Shortly after this, when their scouts reported that a new force was crossing the Logar river, they became a mob bent upon seeking safety. General Charles Gough had been able to communicate by heliograph with General Roberts. The heliograph flashings must have warned Mahomed Jân of the near approach of our reinforcements. By 1 o'clock the enemy were completely broken. . . . Very glad indeed are we to be once more free after nine days' close confinement . . . it has harassed men and officers so much that we dread the reaction; the excitement is over now, and the exposure night after night to snow and slush must have broken down the health of many . . . the worst cases in hospital are suffering from pneumonia. Snow has begun to fall again.

"24*th*.—The enemy which held us in check since December 14th has disappeared, and our troops are once more in Cabul, which shows terrible marks of Mahomed Jân's occupation. Every house belonging

to sirdars known to favour the British has been looted. The Hindoos and Kizilbashes, who relied upon us for protection, may well revile us, since we have left them to their fate; while the Mahomedans, who have looted their houses, insulted their women and terrorized over them for ten days, are now laughing at our inability to follow them to their distant villages. The unlucky Hazaras, who worked so well for us, were hunted down, beaten, and reviled wherever they showed their faces in the streets, and were told jeeringly to call for help upon the British locked up in Sherpur. Our humiliation is so great that to risk a repetition of it would be ruinous. If we are to hold Cabul we must hold it by our bayonets and *not by our rupees.*

"27*th.*—Our Christmas has been one of the sober, thoughtful kind. We have so lately been released from the painful constraint of constant vigilance and hard fighting that our spirits could not rise very high in the scale of festivity; and our losses have so sobered us, that it would seem almost sacrilegious to feast and make merry, with the deaths of so many comrades still fresh in our memory, and with the hospitals full of wounded men, sufferers in the actions fought since the 10th. Besides, everyone is worn out with watching, and it will be some

time before officers and men can once more take life placidly.

"We may seem strong enough now when we have not an enemy within twenty miles; but we seemed equally safe three weeks ago when we disbelieved in the possibility of 30,000 Afghans ever collecting together.

"The question of powder may involve us in difficulties. . . . . If Mahomed Jân had persistently attacked our force in the manner he at last did on December 23rd, we should have been left with about seventy rounds in each man's pouch. Fortunately for us, Mahomed Jân is not a military genius. The two guns of Swinley's battery lost on the 14th are still missing.

"29*th*.—I came across a few disconsolate-looking Hindoos and Kizilbashes on their way to Sherpur to relate their woes, and file their bill of damages against the great British Government which had promised to protect them.

"Wali Mahomed, our *protégé*, has been a great sufferer, and the ladies of his zenanah have been subjected to great indignities. Believing that they had ornaments of great value hidden upon their persons, they were stripped of every stitch of clothing

and turned out in all the shame of nakedness into the streets.

"I left Cabul, feeling that it was indeed a hapless city. The industrious classes, who had been our friends, had been despoiled under our eyes.

"1880, *Jan.* 1*st.*—Our losses have been heavy, and there are now 800 men on the sick list, many of whom must be sent back to India.

"We had laid in stores sufficient for our original division until the spring; but these will not suffice when they are drawn upon by the troops which have since joined us, apart from others that may yet come up.

"7*th.*—An amnesty has been issued dated Dec. 26, which is so worded that it may be looked upon as a sign of weakness, meaning that we dread another uprising.

"9*th.*—Our indecision has reacted upon a section of the citizens of Cabul, who dread another occupation of the tribesmen. The Hindoo merchants are beginning to move out with their families and goods. I had many chances of learning their feeling from one of their number, an intelligent banker, well versed in local politics. His explanation of the migration is that the Hindoos trusted in the British, and looked to them for protection—which was pro-

mised. But when the rising took place, the British had enough to do to hold Sherpur, and consequently they were left at the mercy of the rabble about Mahomed Jân. They will not risk a second occupation, being convinced that it will take place, as we have really not received any considerable reinforcements. 'Besides,' they add, 'no man can say what you will do next; whether you will go back to India or permanently occupy Cabul. We have waited for you to say what is to happen, and nothing has come of it except loss to ourselves and insult to our women.' It is a comment upon our 'waiting upon providence' policy. It should be remembered that all through the troublous times of the Durani dynasty, the forefathers of these Hindoos, and they themselves, have remained in Cabul, and are only leaving the city now because they do not believe in the power of the British to hold it against another army of 50,000 Afghans.

"*Feb.* 10*th*.—The political deadlock continues unchanged. Some local sirdars have posted placards on the walls of the city, pointing out how much better the people were under the Amirs than they are under General Roberts, whom they accuse of sinning through 'foolishness and ignorance.'

"16*th*.—It is rather difficult to follow Abdarrha-

man's movements. . . . If he is ambitious enough to claim Cabul, we shall either have to meet his forces in the field or to offer him the Amirship and our support.

"*March 25th.*—The Government, through Mr. Griffin, made known to the Barakzai Sirdars here what is to be the future of Afghanistan. While the British Government had no desire to annex the country, they were resolved that Candahar and Herat must henceforth no longer appertain to the sovereign of Afghanistan. They would be separate and distinct, and the future ruler of Cabul would have to look upon them as removed from his jurisdiction.

"*April 6th.*—When General Roberts first proposed to Habibulla Khan to go to Ghazni and sound the temper of the leaders, with a view to arrange some basis upon which the settlement of Afghanistan could be carried out, the answer was that it would be useless—they would not listen to him. Later, he went, and for two months strange rumours prevailed. . . . Mahomed Jân talked of a new Jehad, and the driving of the British out of the country. . . . Turning his attention to Mushk-i-Alam, Habibulla showed him that they could get rid of the infidels by negotiations. . . . The Moollah was but half convinced. . . . Then (our agent) turned his attention

to chiefs of his own tribe, and was successful by *means of which we are ignorant. They perhaps scented rewards.*

"14*th*.—The chiefs who attended the durbar represented only a minority of the tribesmen. Mr. Griffin, in his speech, said: 'You have a proverb that force and money are the only powers in Afghanistan. It is for you to choose. Government intends to keep the sword for its enemies and the money for its friends.'

"22*nd*.—Abdarrhaman's intentions towards the British may be looked upon as unformed so far. . . . If we decline to say anything to him, he will either raise a Jehad, or will wait until we have left Cabul, and then quietly swoop down upon any nominee we have placed on the throne, and try his fortune once more for the Amirship. If, on the contrary, we invite him to come forward, he will unquestionably meet us half-way.

"The force told to co-operate with Sir D. Stewart's column advancing from Candahar, left on the 16th April, under command of Major-General Ross. Its numerical strength was nearly 4,000 fighting men of all arms.

"26*th*.—The foraging parties sent out by General Ross were fired at in the Narkh Valley and on the

Bamian road. News was brought in of a combination of the neighbouring tribes. . . . The camp was made as compact as possible; entrenchments were thrown up. A night attack was expected on the 21st, but no alarm was given, and the following morning the force marched to Sar-i-tope. It became daily more apparent that the tribesmen meditated an attack all along the road. Parties of men crowned the hills on the west, and fired at long ranges upon the column. . . . At 9 A.M. Sar-i-tope was reached; before noon a heliograph flash was noticed, and we were soon in communication with the advance party of the Candahar column. The first message was from Sir Donald Stewart, saying: 'On the 19th the division under my command encountered an armed gathering. . . . Preparations were made to attack the strong position held by the enemy . . . when a body of some 3,000 fanatic swordsmen poured down on our troops, spreading out beyond either flank of our line. The fighting lasted an hour, after which the entire body of the enemy spread broadcast over the country. The protection of the baggage prevented pursuit by the cavalry.'

"The news had scarcely reached Sherpur when the cantonment was thrown into a state of excitement by a sharp fight at Charasiab. The tribesmen

made a desperate attempt to cut up Colonel Johnson's party. Since the anxious days of December no such excitement had been felt in Sherpur. . . . The cantonment was all astir, and the secret orders which had been issued when General Ross moved out were at once put into execution . . . one might have imagined that Sherpur was on the eve of a second siege. These precautions were necessary, as our spies had brought in news that 6,000 Kohistanis were near Baba Kuch Kar, and our Governor of Koh-Daman had sent in alarming reports of Mir Butcha's intentions. . . . The news first sent in was that 2,000 tribesmen had opened fire on the camp at daybreak. At 9.50 Colonel Johnson heliographed that the enemy was being reinforced, and that his troops were debarred from anything but acting on the defence, as their baggage would have had to be sacrificed if an attempt had been made to storm the hills . . . The infantry were protected by the Karez mounds; but the cavalry and guns were exposed to a heavy cross-fire from the orchards, hill-side, and ditches in front. . . . No more trying position for cavalry can be imagined than waiting helplessly in the open. The severity of the fire can be understood from the fact that three mounted officers, Major White, Lieutenant Dick Cunningham, and Lieutenant

Robertson, had casualties to report. . . . Colonel Jenkins' horse was shot, and the Guides' cavalry lost 8 horses killed and 24 wounded; one-tenth of their troopers were really put out of action. I have dwelt thus particularly on this class of casualties simply to prove the resolute way in which the tribesmen attacked, and the mischief they can do with good rifles in their hands. . . . Once or twice it seemed as if a rush were meditated. . . . It was believed that when reinforcements arrived, an attempt would be made to close round in the rear of Colonel Jenkins and cut off his retreat. By noon, this movement was apparent; but General Macpherson, with his forces, put an end to the affair. Our expenditure of Martini and Snider ammunition was over 70,000 rounds, while the two guns fired each 45 rounds.

"It seems a pity that a scoundrel like Padsha Khan cannot meet with his deserts. He was forgiven for fighting against us in December, and he now collects his men and attacks our troops, as if he had never received any subsidy from us.

"*May 2nd.*—General Stewart arrived at 10 o'clock, and has taken over the command from Sir F. Roberts. Sir Donald Stewart's march upon Ghazni was uneventful as far as Shajui, the limit of the Candahar province, but from that point a change took place.

Several thousand men collected on the hills to the east, and marched day by day parallel to the British force. It was deemed unwise to attack them, as they would probably have retired up the hill-sides. Besides, the baggage train of the column was above six miles in length, and to have detached a brigade to make an attack upon the enemy would have left the baggage open to molestation.

"With the British force were several thousand Hazaras, who, as is usually the case with native allies, were rather a source of anxiety than any real aid. They marched in wild irregularity on the flanks of the column, and every deserted village was plundered by them without compunction. Thus they appropriated large quantities of supplies which would have been welcome to our army, and it was, at times, annoying to find that they had cleared a village of grain before our men could arrive.

"Sir D. Stewart encamped two long marches south of Ghazni on the 18th of April, the enemy being a few miles away. . . . The main body of the Afghans remained on the hills to take advantage of any success the Ghazis might gain. The fanaticism of the 3,000 men who made this desperate charge has perhaps never been equalled; they had 500 yards to cover before they could come to close quarters with

our infantry, and they made nothing of the distance. They rushed forward in three lines; many were on horseback, and nearly all were armed with tulwars, knives, and pistols. Some carried rifles and match-locks, while a few had simply pikes made of bayonets or pieces of sharp iron fastened upon long sticks. The Ghazis' attack broke with great violence on our flanks. Lancers are always at a disadvantage when infantry have broken their ranks, and the 19th was no exception to the rule. In an instant they were lost to sight in a cloud of dust and smoke; and, owing, perhaps, to some misunderstanding, or to men losing their heads, in the confusion a troop charged in the rear of the infantry line and came smashing into the 19th Punjab Infantry. All was confusion for a moment; the ammunition mules were stampeded, and, with the riderless horses of the lancers killed or wounded, dashed into the head-quarters Staff. The Ghazis had continued their onward rush, and were engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with our infantry. Some penetrated to within twenty yards of the spot on which the Staff were watching the action; and so critical was the moment, that Sir Donald Stewart and every man of his Staff drew their swords and prepared for self-defence. The impetuosity of the Ghazis carried them right in the rear of

our infantry, and but for the cool promptitude of Colonel Lyster, V.C., commanding the 3rd Goorkhas, this rush might have had terrible results. Colonel Lyster formed his men into company squares and poured volley after volley into the fanatics as they surged onwards. In the meantime the attack had also burst all along the line; and in the hurry and confusion some of our men did not fix bayonets.

"The General's escort were driven back and the 59th were ordered to check the rush. The order was so delivered that it was understood to imply the retirement of the whole regiment, and the movement was carried out. The Ghazis were so close that there was a tendency to collect in groups for mutual protection—a fatal course when a general rush has to be checked; but General Hughes checked this in time, and after a few minutes of *excitement*—quite pardonable under the circumstances—our men commenced a continuous fire which swept away the Ghazis and covered the plain with dead. . . . When the enemy retreated, the cavalry pursuit had to be checked, as the six miles of baggage had to be looked after, and, with so many regiments in advance, it was feared that detached bodies of Ghazis might run amuck in our rear. The action lasted but an hour, but the casualties were unusually heavy.

"On the 20th April the cavalry reached Ghazni. . . . Sir D. Stewart intended moving out on the 23rd; but it was rumoured that the gathering of men seen on the 21st were the advance guard of an army which Muskh-i-Alam had raised. Sir D. Stewart resolved to disperse the tribesmen before moving northwards.

"BATTLE OF SHALEZ.—Two batteries fired the unusual number of thirty rounds of shell per gun, a total of 360 rounds; but seven-pounder and nine-pounder shells can do but little damage against walled enclosures and stout mud walls. . . . When our reinforcements arrived a sudden burst of fanatical enthusiasm seized the defenders of the villages . . . their unexpected boldness was met by our batteries, and ultimately the enemy broke and retired.

"*Sherpur, May 16th.*—We have still to levy the fine inflicted upon the city for the murder of our Envoy. (It was never levied.)

"*26th.*—We are on the eve of receiving an answer from Abdarrhaman, to whom we sent a mission. . . . A large party in the city maintain that he will never visit Cabul so long as the British force occupies the city . . . they argue that he is too wise to ruin himself in the eyes of the nation by accepting the Amirship from the hands of a British general.

"*June 4th.*—Abdarrhaman is serenely independent

in his attitude, and has given no promise whatever on any specific points connected with the Amirship. He seems fully aware of our awkward position in the country, and is not at all anxious to aid us in extricating ourselves. He is working to make the British, and not himself, the grateful party in the negotiations. There is a cool, self-possessed tone of inquiry in his letter, as if he felt himself master of the situation and meant to dictate his own terms. We are appearing in the eyes of the people rather as suppliants than dictators to Abdarrhaman.

"Cabul has indeed proved a white elephant. . . . We are so anxious to get rid of the beast that we are thrusting it as a gift upon a man who looks upon it as his lawful property which we have seriously injured. The independent spirit shown by the Sirdar cannot but have a bad effect upon the tribal chiefs; and if we allow the negotiations to drag on much longer, serious mischief may follow. The natural restlessness of Afghans will not permit them to watch and wait for months, and already there are signs of a turbulent spirit manifesting itself.

"*July 2nd.*—We have so far lowered our pride as to treat with Abdarrhaman in order to secure peace, and now we are in the awkward position of finding our words twisted, their meaning perverted, and the

pretender posing as a patriot. In our ultimatum we stated clearly and distinctly that the Sirdar would be welcomed as Amir of Afghanistan; but that Candahar and the Kuram Valley could not be surrendered to him, as their fate had once for all been settled. He has chosen to construe our terms into an offer of a united Afghanistan such as his grandfather the Dost ruled over, and with calm assurance he says that he accepts such offer. He has sent circulars to all the tribes that the British have given up to him the Amirship of the whole country, and that he will shortly arrive among them to take up the reins of power. The circular was received in Cabul fifteen hours before Abdarrhaman's answer reached our political officer. The tribesmen grew so bold that they advanced within a few miles of General Hill's force. . . . Palliser's cavalry brigade scattered them; they fought with desperation . . . . there were many hairbreadth escapes . . . . the cavalry did not return to camp until late, having been fifteen hours uninterruptedly in the saddle.

"22*nd*.—We have formally acknowledged Abdarrhaman as Amir of Cabul. The Sirdars sent to represent him at the durbar were sorrily arrayed for such an occasion; but as the representatives of the Amir, they had to be treated with every consideration.

"27*th*.—We have withdrawn our guard from the city. . . . The citizens have begun to swagger again in all their turbulent boastfulness, and our soldiers are warned against entering the bazaar.

"*Aug.* 2*nd*.—Interest has been divided during the past week between the startling news of the Maiwand disaster and the approach of the Amir to Cabul. A strong division has been told off to march southward under Sir F. Roberts. The flower of the force thus being taken away, it becomes imperative that the army left in Sherpur should retire upon the Khyber line without delay.

"Our representatives have at last met Abdarrhaman, although our programme of a public durbar has not been carried out. The Amir went through the ordeal of receiving the officers introduced to him with quiet self-possession and good humour Behind him were clustered his wild-looking body-guard, each man looking upon the ceremonious introduction with more contempt than curiosity.

"The Amir was told that necessity might arise for marching troops from Cabul to Candahar, as Ayub Khan had shown unexpected strength. In answer to the question whether there would be objections raised to such a march, he said he should like to consult the people with him. At a second inter-

view the Amir said the tribes might object to a force marching to Candahar; but that if no long halts were made on the way, there could be no objection on his part.

"It was not until last evening that the full meaning of the sinister news from Candahar was generally known in camp. When Colonel St. John's telegram was read to an audience of twenty or thirty officers, we could scarcely realise that 1,200 of our men had been killed in open fight, and that the remainder of the ill-fated brigade had made the best of their way back to Candahar over an almost waterless country. But there was no mistaking the hard facts set forth, the list of killed and wounded, and the ominous closing paragraph that the British garrison were preparing for a siege. Our experience in December had taught us a salutary lesson: the Afghans respond to the call of a successful leader with a readiness which defies all ordinary calculation.

"The behaviour of the Amir, since he has learnt that a strong force will march to Candahar, has been all that could be wished. He is wise enough to see that Ayub Khan is the only dangerous rival he now has in Afghanistan, and that, if we break up the Herat army, Cabul will be made quite safe.

"Sir D. Stewart (with 20,000 men, including camp

followers) left for India, *viâ* the Khyber. His march will, it is expected, be a very peaceful one, as the chief Ghilzai leaders are with the Amir, who has been quietly warned to keep them with him and out of mischief until our troops get to the east of Gandamak. How we have hated our sojourn in Afghanistan of late, when the hot weather found matters not yet settled, only the record of our curses, an it be kept, can ever reveal.

"10*th*.—The march (of Sir F. Roberts's force) to Zahidabad was very trying. The 92nd Highlanders and 23rd Pioneers were so tired and worn out that many threw themselves down without energy enough to take more than a mouthful of food. It was not the distance (16 miles) which told upon us so much as the long halts in the sun, while the baggage was being pushed forward.

"On the 12th the road became so narrow that the baggage animals had in many places to go in Indian file. A few hundred yards of the road over the Samburak Kotal were so steep that some of the cavalry ponies cast their loads.

"15*th*.—To avoid placing in doolies men who are only foot-sore, Colonel Low is buying up all the donkeys he can find.

"23*rd*. — *Khelat-i-Ghilzai*. — Fifteenth day from

Cabul. Only those who have shared in the march can form an idea of the hardship involved. At Chardeh we were anxious to purchase camels from Powindah traders; they refused to send even 100, and Colonel Low with 300 men surrounded their camp. The Powindahs had hidden the camel saddles and turned the camels loose, while women and children rushed among the soldiers abusing them and making a terrific din. Some shots were fired at the Goorkhas, who returned the fire. Lieutenant Gordon had a narrow escape from being hamstrung. . . . Eventually 150 camels were captured.

"On August 18th villagers brought donkey-loads of water-melons, which our men fell upon ravenously. The want of water told most upon the followers, whose state at times was pitiable.

"For the first six miles out of Oba Karez not a drop of water was found. August 20th will always be remembered by those who survive the operations now being carried, as a day full of privation, and calling for much endurance from officers and men. We marched 21 miles to Panjak. Water was so scarce that followers fell exhausted on the road-side. . . . The heat was greater than ever in the day, although in the early morning the air had been bitterly cold. One company of a native regiment laid down in an

irrigation channel, the water in which was too muddy to drink. Not a tree gave shade in any direction, and the arid plain seemed to grow red hot. I do not wish to exaggerate the sufferings of the army; but it should be counted in our favour hereafter that we were marching day after day through a half-desolate land, with no supports to fall back upon in case of disaster, and uncertain of what lay before us; with nothing but thin tents to shield us from a sun which laughed to scorn 100° in the shade, and with a water-supply so uncertain that we never knew in the morning where our camping-ground in the evening might be.

"A letter received shows the thorough nature of the investment of Candahar, and how helpless the garrison has become in the face of Ayub's overwhelming strength.

"*27th.—Robat.*—Colonel St. John reached our camp on the 25th. We listened to long stories of the disaster at Maiwand, the terrible retreat and the abandonment of cantonments. Our entry into Candahar has been made with a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the garrison we have relieved.

"BATTLE OF CANDAHAR.—On the evening of the 31st August the plan of attack was finally decided. When General Roberts and his staff rode through

Mazra, the rout of Ayub was complete. . . . In four hours our force had scattered the hitherto victorious Afghan army. . . . The cavalry pursuit resulted in some 400 of the enemy being killed.

"The prevailing tone of the Candahar garrison was still one of depression and want of heart. . . . There had been undoubted demoralization within the walls during the siege. Candahar bears an ill reputation for Ghazi-ism, and there were many discontented spirits within the walls, even after the 18,000 Pathans had been turned out.

"*Sept. 20th.—Candahar.*—Respecting criticism on General Roberts' action of the 1st inst., it is said our cavalry pursuit was really inoperative, as only 400 of the fugitives were killed . . . it seems to be forgotten that not one but many roads were open to them, while the mountainous nature of the country was all in favour of trained hill-men."

CHAPTER VII.

Extracts from Dr. Duke's Book.

I have ventured thus largely to quote from Mr. Hensman's letters, in order to present to the reader a number of consecutive incidents illustrating the entire campaign of 1879–80; and I would ask him now to peruse a few extracts from the diary of a medical officer* who served in a cavalry corps throughout the same campaign, as it presents many of its incidents from a somewhat different standpoint.

Extracts from Dr. Duke's *Recollections of the Cabul Campaign.* (W. H. Allen & Co. 1883.)

"1879. *Sept.*—From Thall to Kuram, 51 miles. An Afghan caught Stewart, of the survey party, by

* *Recollections of the Cabul Campaign.* By Dr. Duke. (W. H. Allen & Co. 1883.)

the beard, and tried to make him repeat the Mahomedan creed; he then turned round and tried the same to me. Before we had mounted our ponies one of the men rode past me on the narrow path so rudely as to force me out of his way, and I should have fallen had it not been for a rock on which I sat down. All this was very hard to bear; but it was useless to remonstrate, and I firmly believe that, had we used our arms, we should at once have been murdered. . . . Why was not our Ambassador allowed to proceed by the Khyber route to the capital, instead of the inhospitable Shutargardan, a road blocked for months with snow?

"The remains of our camel transport, a few hundreds out of many thousands, were kept on the lower slopes of the hills. The campaign practically proved that no proper food for this useful animal is procurable in the Kuram Valley. . . . Indeed, the camel did not thrive west of Bahadur Khel, a short distance from Kohat. Between Thall and the Peiwar the poor camel was found on the roadside in the various stages of death, from the point when he first throws himself down, far from food and water, never to rise again, to the latter stage, when his haughty eyes are dimmed and his head is twisted painfully backwards in the throes of death. Starved, weak, overladen,

with often sore-back as the result, the poor beast lies down, either because he cannot stand, or because he has made up his mind to go no further. His driver takes the latter view. Whack, whack, whack on one side, severe kicks on the other, while a third assistant forcibly pulls his tail in the onward direction, are answered by deep groans and jerks. Sometimes the animal rises, and falls after proceeding a few paces, and then nothing will induce him again to get up. His load is taken off, and he is left to die on the roadside, never attempting to move from the spot.

"On the 17th Sept. the wing of the 72nd encamped near the fort of Kasim Khel. . . . It was hoped that sufficient supplies would be collected at Kushi to enable our force to act independently of its base. While holding the pass two difficulties were offered to the Commissariat, one being the water-supply, and the other forage for cattle which could only be obtained in the smallest quantities and at exorbitant rates. The mules of the battery obtained little forage beyond the daily issue of grain. . . . They persistently neighed and whinnied at night in consequence, and, in spite of the cold, ate up their own or their comrades' blankets, and even the hair on each other's tails.

"Kushi is in a deep ravine. . . . All suffered

much from thirst, as no water had been obtained since leaving the Shinkai Kotal."

"*Sept.* 26*th.*—The cavalry and guns accompanied General Baker in a long détour in search of forage. The villagers were sullen and refractory. . . . The aspect of the guns pointed on the villages, however, produced the desired effect. Our presence was evidently distasteful to the Afghans, and this was expressed on two occasions to two officers, who told me what had occurred. A young officer in the Quartermaster-General's department rode up to one of Padsha Khan's villages, then our *well-paid friend*, when a villager, annoyed at his presence, angrily drew his hand several times suggestively across his throat. Another villager said to a cavalry officer, 'Do not come near me, or your shadow will defile me.'

"*Oct.* 9*th.*—*Near Cabul.*—The escape of the enemy at this time was a deplorable occurrence, as they were chiefly composed of those troops who had killed Cavignari. . . . They first defied and then escaped us. On the 12th Nov. the first snow fell, and the cold rapidly increased. The persistent cold wind did much harm, especially among the camp-followers. On the 14th the first convoy of sick left for India. Reports became general in the camp that the Afghan

nation had determined to combine and oust the hated Kafir from their dominions. On the 21st General Baker marched for Maidan to collect forage and disperse any armed bodies of men found in the neighbourhood.

"*Nov.* 24*th.*—Bahadur Khan's fort destroyed by us. 25*th.*—The people attacked the Cabul police sent to a village to recover property. 26*th.*—Rumours reach Cabul of a contemplated rising of the Kohistans and Safis of Tagao.

"27*th.*—General Baker's reconnoitring party attacked at Ben-i-badan. 29*th.*—A letter received from the newly-appointed Governor of Kohistan. His order calling on the head-men to come in had been ignored, while the people openly declared their intention of raising a holy war and destroying the British force in Cabul.

"*Dec.* 1*st.* — Mahomed Hussain Khan, our Governor of Maidan, was killed; another of our governors was attacked and fled for refuge.

"*Dec.* 7*th.* — General Roberts telegraphed to Foreign Secretary: 'Affairs round Cabul less satisfactory of late. . . . Anxious as I am to avoid any further expeditions, I may be forced, if this movement spreads, to send out troops again.' In the afternoon of the 8th our movement against the Afghans com-

menced: a brigade under General Macpherson marched to Killa Asher. On the 9th another brigade under General Baker marched and camped at Charasia. On the 10th General Macpherson marched in a northerly direction. . . . The enemy, who fired on our cavalry, were taking up a strong position on the hills above Karez Mir.

"The cold at starting was severe, and now as we entered the lower barren hills the wind dropped, whilst the sun-rays poured down with a fierceness out of all comparison with the previous cold, and our men began to fall out. No vegetation grew on these barren hills, which reflected the heat powerfully, and, as no water was procurable, the supply brought on our mules began to run short. . . . The road was exceedingly bad. . . . After the sun had set the air became intensely cold, and the small stream we had to cross froze hard, while solid bits of ice and icicles barred the way and made walking extremely difficult for man, much more so for the beasts. . . . The camp was laid in pitch darkness, and the coldness of the wind was very intense! We heartily pitied the rear-guard near the top of the pass, for it would be impossible now to bring in all the luggage.

"A telegram from General Roberts explained the

object of the brigade movements: 'General Macpherson's brigade, with cavalry and horse artillery, will advance to-day (11th December) towards Arghandi, Kotal, and Maidan, and should effect a junction with General Baker.' We had, however, reckoned without our host. . . . General Macpherson discovered the enemy in front over Killa Kazi, and brought his guns into action. The Afghans seeing no infantry . . . advanced boldly on the battery, and, opening out their lines, out-flanked our force. The fire of the battery in no way checked them, and the guns were forced to retire. In the confusion which followed, the guns became hopelessly jammed in the formidable dykes in their way. With the hope of saving them the cavalry made a charge; but the nature of the ground was unfavourable, and no real impression was made against overwhelming numbers. The cavalry were driven back, and the four guns, together with our killed and many wounded, fell into the hands of the Afghans, who afterwards advanced on Cabul. General Roberts rode out towards the scene of action. . . . The enemy advanced within a few yards of General Roberts' position. . . . All now to be hoped for was a steady retirement.

"*Dec.* 14*th.* — Soon after daybreak the enemy were on the alert. Their determined advance almost

up to our guns rendered our position most critical. At half-past four Macpherson's brigade reached the open plain to the south-west of Sherpur, and found Colonel Jenkins's force and a wing of the 92nd Highlanders drawn up to cover their flanks. By 5 o'clock the whole division was inside the walls of the cantonments. Anxiety was depicted on the face of our bravest officers on the night of the 14th December. During the 15th all troops that could be spared were employed in strengthening our defences. The Afghans were unwisely resting on their laurels; some were looting the city, others were clearing the Bala Hissar of the powder in the magazine. On the 17th December the enemy at last showed in force. During the afternoon the 5th Punjab Infantry drove them from the King's garden, from cover of which they had been annoying our bastions. On the 18th the Afghans were again on the alert. During the night snow fell and added much to the general discomfort, as nearly the whole force were obliged to sleep at their posts.—(Fighting continued on the 19th, 20th, and 21st.) The 22nd passed in a comparatively quiet and ominous manner. Early on the 23rd the enemy opened fire and were routed. On the 24th it was noised about that the Afghan army had disappeared. As the day advanced a number of men

and children were coming towards us from the city, wringing their hands and proclaiming the misery they had gone through during Mahomed Jân's reign of terror. With delight we hailed the advance guard of Gough's brigade . . . their rapid advance no doubt hastened Mahomed Jân's attack on Sherpur. 25*th*.—The city of Cabul presents a woeful aspect. The Bala Hissar was again occupied by our troops in January.

" The first quarter of the year quietly slipped away. In April our Government determined to send a large force from Candahar to Cabul under General Donald Stewart. A small division was despatched from Cabul to meet General Stewart's column. The division left Cabul on the 14th. Bahadur Khan (whose villages we had looted in November) returned to his head-quarters, and proceeded to annoy us by firing on our foraging parties. A reconnoitring party under Captain the Honourable Charles Dutton nearly fell into an ambuscade, and had a narrow escape. . . . Having made a détour, the party did not reach camp until after dark. On the next morning our march was resumed. For two days we were annoyed by firing from the hills, especially where General Baker had been nearly surprised in November.

" General Stewart's force advanced to within five

miles of our camp. On the following day we returned with General Stewart to Cabul, where he took up the chief command.

"While our little skirmishes were going on at Saidabad, a portion of the 92nd Highlanders, the Guides Infantry and Cavalry, and some guns of the F.A. Royal Horse Artillery, who had been despatched under Colonel Jenkins to Charasiab, were attacked and partly surrounded by a large body of Afghans. At one time the force was considerably pressed, the Afghans getting up very close, when they were observed drawing out their knives and placing them on the ground with fiendish pleasure at the hope of soon using them against some of the Kafir throats. Reinforcements had to be sent to their aid under General Macpherson.

"Immediately after the return of Ross's division, a brigade of all arms went out under General Baker, feeding itself locally. It returned to Sherpur about the 8th June. Shortly afterwards another brigade of all arms marched out for feeding under Brigadier Charles Gough. A reconnoitring party of the 3rd Bengal Cavalry was attacked by a small body of Afghans, who advanced in perfect military order. The Koh-Daman Valley is well populated and possesses orchards, vineyards, and magnificent plane and walnut

trees, which are as grateful to the eye as their shade is refreshing to the body. Our camps were invariably pitched in open, dry, hot, uncultivated land. . . . The fear of *political* complications prevented our camps being pitched near villages. While at Kariz Mir our reconnoitring cavalry were frequently fired on by the followers of a bloodthirsty scoundrel called Mir Butcha.

"Our camp moved to Killa Hadji, eight miles from Sherpur. Here the news reached us of the defeat of our troops under General Burrows at Maiwand. On the 30th July Sir D. Stewart, Sir F. Roberts, and Mr. L. Griffin arrived at our camp. On the following day a meeting was arranged with Abdarrhaman. On the 3rd August the political arrangements were completed, and Brigadier Charles Gough's brigade returned to Sherpur, several of its regiments having to accompany General Roberts in his march from Cabul to Candahar, the cavalry corps to which I belong being one of those selected.

"The object of our march was the relief of the city of Candahar, then closely invested by the victorious army of Ayoub Khan, who had defeated our forces under General Burrows on the 27th July 1880 at Maiwand, 45 miles from Candahar. At the mess-table, the battle of Maiwand, with the terrible slaughter of

our troops, was of course much discussed. . . . would the diminished garrison of Candahar be able to hold its own until our arrival? Two days after our departure, Sir D. Stewart's division marched for India. Our splendid body of troops numbered close upon 10,000; they formed essentially a fighting force, hampered only by such camp-followers and transport (near 8,000 men) as were absolutely necessary.

"On the 7th August we marched to the ground east of the Bala Hissar. 8*th*.—Charasiab. 9*th*.—Zahidabad. 10*th*.—Wazir Killa. 11*th*.—Baraki Barak. 12*th*.—Saidabad. 13*th*.—Takia. 14*th*.—Ghazni. On the 16*th* our camp was formed at Yerghatta (17 miles) a most desolate, arid spot. The infantry had a most trying time of it, owing to a dust storm. 18*th*.—Karez-i-Oba. Each march seemed hotter and more wearisome. Very little water was found on the road. 19*th* and 20*th*.—Long marches terribly fatiguing to the rear-guard, who necessarily arrived late and had little time for rest and food. 21*st*.—A trooper sent back to a village with a message was probably killed, for he never was seen again. 23*rd*.—Kelat-i-Ghilzai. 26*th*.—Tirandez. Heat very severe. News from Candahar that Ayoub had raised the siege on the 24th. 31*st*.—Arrived before Candahar, 84 miles

from Kelat-i-Ghilzai, 320 from Cabul. *Sept.* 1.—Battle of Candahar. Our success was complete. 3*rd.*—Moved to Kokeran. Heat excessive. Mountain torrents to cross. 20*th.*—Our return march to India commenced. 26*th.*—Chaman. 30*th.*—Quetta, having crossed the Kojak Pass on the 27th to Killa Abdalla.

"Our cavalry was selected to accompany General MacGregor's force organized to punish the Maris, a powerful hill-tribe who had risen in arms after the defeat of our troops at Maiwand. After a day's halt we turned our heads toward the Bolan Pass and reached Nari Bank, close to Sibi, in six days. On the 12th October we marched through the Nari gorge, and on the 13th joined General MacGregor's force at Baba Kuch. On the 17th we marched for Thull, which we reached on the 22nd. At Spintangai we crossed a terribly steep pass for cavalry and baggage; the last march to Thull (21 miles) was over one of the most difficult roads I have ever seen. We crossed five small but steep passes, and finally entered a succession of narrow rocky gorges with precipitous sides. one place the rocks converged so that a mule with baggage could only just clear the sides. . . . With the exception of the plain in which Thull and the forest of Chotiali are situated, and one other plain that we

subsequently entered after crossing a frightful pass, we wandered through barren hills, meeting few signs of man. . . . Our expedition, however, was successful. The chiefs of the offending tribes, who had done an incalculable amount of damage and reckless mischief to the wonderful railway stock and buildings we had commenced at Quetta *viâ* Harnai, tendered their submission to General MacGregor, and paid up part of the fine imposed on them. The fine realized can never repay the damage committed."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Campaign of 1879–80.

As stated in Mr. Hensman's letters and Dr. Duke's book, a force of 10,000 fighting men, under General Roberts, marched on Cabul, in September 1879, to avenge the murder of our Envoy. After defeating the Afghan army at Charasia on the 6th of October, General Roberts entered Cabul on the 11th. It was then well known that the leaders and chief actors in the massacre at the British Embassy were certain Herat regiments of the Amir, who had arrived in Cabul in August and, after fighting against us at Charasia, had dispersed and retired to their villages. Under these circumstances the obvious course for fulfilling the mission of the expedition would have been to pursue and punish the criminal fugitives;

but sufficient troops could not be detached for that purpose without dangerously weakening our army. Besides, experience had taught us that to follow the enemy into the recesses of their mountains was to court disappointment and disaster. Thus the punishment of the actual murderers was found to lie beyond our power; whereupon we decided on bringing to justice such of the abettors as we could apprehend and convict, and on imposing a fine on the city of Cabul for its connivance at the crime. Accordingly a number of executions took place on the best evidence we could obtain, and the Amir Yakub Khan was sent a prisoner to India, on suspicion of his connivance at the outrage. Had our army then levied the fine imposed on the city of Cabul and left the country, it would have accomplished its mission so far as it lay in its power; and the nation would have been spared the disasters and humiliations which soon followed.

Unfortunately, the success of the opening operations seemed to have unduly elated the British Cabinet and fatally blinded it to the actual condition of things prevailing in Afghanistan. Believing, apparently, from the temporary dispersion of the hostile

army, that the country lay at our mercy,* the Government decided on extending the original scope of the expedition, and on preparing for a lengthened occupation by appointing district governors to supersede the officials of the Amir. Indeed, so sanguine were the views entertained of our power and influence that a telegram appeared in the *Times*, the second week in December, to the effect that Afghanistan was, to all intents and purposes, a conquered country which our troops could traverse from north to south without hindrance. Neither this pompous announcement nor the imbecile attempt to control the internal administration of the country was in any way justified by existing circumstances.

Our army was in a particularly precarious situation; it had no reserves at hand, and its communications with India were uncertain; its energies were being used chiefly in the collection of supplies, while its

* The same tendency to blindly over-estimate our advantages appears in the Secretary of State's despatch of 7th August 1879, in which it is stated at para. 3, with reference to the situation in Dec. 1878: "The passage of the Afghan frontier by British troops was followed by the defeat of the forces which guarded it and the rapid occupation of positions which placed the territories of the Amir at the mercy of the British Government." The sequel has shown how far that statement was justified; meanwhile the despatch was published as a Parliamentary paper (C. 2402, 1879), and probably served the political purpose for which it had been written.

strength was very sensibly affected by the foraging and other detached parties which it had constantly to send out. As early as November 14th the scarcity of forage led to the determination of sending back the greater part of our cavalry to the valley of Jellalabad; and before the end of that month it became known that several powerful tribes were preparing to attack us. A few days later the force, which went out to break up the tribal gathering, were in full retreat before the enemy, abandoning their guns, evacuating the fortress of Cabul, and seeking safety in the entrenched camp at Sherpur. It was during these distressing events that the telegram in the *Times* announcing our supremacy in Afghanistan was being read by the public at home. Then, as regards our district governors, it has already been seen, from Mr. Hensman's letters, how they were defied, insulted, and threatened with death by the very people over whom they were sent to rule, and how that threat was, in one instance, actually carried into effect.

Far greater humiliations still were, however, yet in store for us. On regaining our freedom after the investment of Sherpur, we were confronted with the evidence of the oppression and indignities suffered in Cabul by the Hindoos and others whom we had

pledged ourselves to protect.* The tribes in the surrounding country were meanwhile once more combining to expel us, and our military prestige had so greatly fallen in the estimation of the people that the Hindoo merchants and bankers of Cabul, whose forefathers and themselves had lived and prospered in that city under the Durani dynasty, began to emigrate, because they did not believe that we could hold the place against the impending attack of the tribesmen.

In these embarrassing circumstances the British Cabinet had once more recourse to *diplomacy*; and a message was sent to Abdarrhaman, grandson of Dost Mahomed, proposing to confer on him the Amirship and the amity of the British Government, provided he surrendered Candahar and Herat. No answer being received to that proposal, an ultimatum was sent, peremptorily claiming Candahar and the Kuram valley. Abdarrhaman, however, declined holding any negotiations whatever on the subject, and clearly let us know that he maintained his right to the

* This was the more galling that the Government had, not long before, published a despatch stating at para. 42: "We deem it absolutely requisite that, in countries like Afghanistan, the power of the British Government to punish its enemies and protect its friends should be so generally recognised as to render unnecessary the frebuent assertion of it" (C. 2401, 1879, p. 36).

sovereignty of the whole kingdom ruled by his grandsire. Our ultimatum was thus superciliously ignored, and we had to put up with the affront, simply because we had ventured to make demands which we had no power to enforce.

In the midst of these untoward circumstances, news reached us that our southern army was completely defeated at Maiwand, and its remnant closely besieged at Candahar. It then became urgent that our best troops should at once march to their relief; but could we reach Candahar in good time, looking at the opposition we were certain to encounter on the road? Then, again, what would be the fate of those we left behind at Sherpur; some twenty thousand men, consisting largely of sick and wounded soldiers and camp-followers?

In these circumstances, we had no choice but to submit to such terms as we could obtain; and we had accordingly to acknowledge Abdarrhaman as Amir of Afghanistan, without any limitation of territory; to pay him £100,000; to surrender some thirty of our guns; to leave intact the defensive works we had raised round Cabul; to pledge ourselves to refund the value of the treasure we had seized in that city, and to *renounce the fine we had imposed on its inhabitants for their connivance at the murder of our Representative!*

Such have been the results of the war which was carried on for two long years in vain attempts to execute the enigmatic policy of a "scientific frontier" for India. The war cost twenty millions sterling, thousands of lives and an appalling amount of human suffering, and it ended without the smallest advantage having been gained to compensate for all it had cost. Nay, the balance was quite the other way. Our failure in a contest with a semi-barbarous foe lowered our military prestige; while the humiliations we suffered at the hands of a people whom we unsuccessfully attacked for the purpose of robbing them of their territory, have cast a stain on our national character, which it should be our most anxious desire to obliterate.

Unfortunately the incidents of the war and its results are but imperfectly known to the public; some of those incidents have been suppressed, others distorted, in official documents and the writings of interested or deluded persons; while military men who carefully watched the course of the operations have been precluded, by an implied rule of their service, from publicly discussing a subject which involved political issues and party questions of import.

Had it been necessary to apply to Parliament for

funds to prosecute the war, the House of Commons would certainly not have consented to tax their constituents without inquiring into the precise object, the necessity and the justice of the venture. But the Indian treasury was made to supply the money; and, as India has no representative in Parliament, explanations were avoided, and those who plunged the nation into the calamitous operations of 1878–80 have never been called to answer for their action. These circumstances will account for the facility with which the fatal policy of 1876 was revived in 1885, and for the countenance and support which it has since received from numerous irresponsible advocates. One of this class of writers suggests that "all local hostility might be conjured by discreet diplomacy and the omnipotent rupee" (*Times*, 18th November 1890). This, however, is simply ignoring the experience of our last expedition, when rupees were prodigally lavished without, in any appreciable degree, diminishing the hostility of the tribes; and diplomacy in every shape signally failed, resulting sometimes in discomfiture and humiliation. Nor can any surprise be felt at these results, seeing that the means suggested, and which virtually amount to astuteness and corruption, are not British characteristics; and it was probably the repugnance of

Englishmen to the employment of such means, that provoked the following remark recorded in Mr. Hensman's letter of August 1880, written on the eve of our final departure from Cabul: "How we have hated our sojourn in Afghanistan of late, only the record of our curses, an it be kept, can reveal."

CHAPTER IX.

Hon. George Curzon's Chapter on the North-West Frontier of India.

Among other papers recently published in support of the "Forward Frontier Policy" a very interesting one is the chapter which the Hon. George Curzon has added to Mr. W. S. Caine's book entitled *Picturesque India*. Written in an attractive and lucid style, it contains much information which is not generally available to the public, and throws a clear light on the views in furtherance of which the railway to Chaman has been made, and new lines towards Cabul and Ghazni are in contemplation.

After stating that "it is to protect the Indian Empire from the danger of a Russian advance that the new frontier has been traced and fortified," the

the writer goes on to say: "It is the forward move from the old Indus Valley line across the Middle-belt, and the relations entered into with its occupants, that have, during the last five years, transformed the unscientific frontier (we had) into the scientific frontier, which I will now proceed to delineate." In this delineation Landi Kotal, Peiwar Kotal, a post at the end of the Gumal Pass, and Chaman are referred to as important points on the new boundary-line. It is difficult to understand how these isolated spots, which are separated from each other by mountainous regions perfectly impervious to military operations, can constitute a protective frontier line for our distant Indian territories, from which they are likewise separated by mountain defiles of extraordinary difficulty, occupied by tribes who have hitherto manifested the most inveterate hostility towards us.

Indeed, a careful reader can scarcely rise from the perusal of Mr. Curzon's paper without being struck with the fact that our railway to Candahar, and the other lines said to be in contemplation, while they might subserve a future invasion of Afghanistan, could afford no protection to our Indian frontier, which they must, on the contrary, tend greatly to weaken by smoothing some of those formidable

obstacles which a Russian army would otherwise have to surmount before it could reach India.

It is true that a British garrison would be posted at the extremity of each defile; but how would that garrison be supported? Mr. Curzon, anticipating the question, tells us that "the attitude of the border tribes has, in recent years, become much more friendly towards England than towards Afghanistan," and that not only would they aid us in acquiring the means of "swift movement for the support of our positions beyond their country, but are themselves gradually being transformed into an irregular frontier guard of the Indian Empire."

All who have paid the least attention to our relations with those tribes will at once see how grave would be the error of our relying for the safety of our outposts on the protestations of a people proverbially treacherous and fanatically jealous of the inviolability of their territory. Padshah Khan, a tribal chieftain, whom we liberally subsidized and reckoned among our best friends in the late war, kept on the mask of hypocrisy while the tribes around us were combining for our destruction, but cast it off and joined our enemies the very moment the time for action against us had arrived. And hundreds of similar cases might be cited in which our money-gifts and

other favours during that war were requited by hatred and treachery.

A Punjab official, writing in 1868 in support of the "Forward Frontier Policy," which was then under consideration, recorded the following remarks on the character of the Border tribes:—

"By birth they are savages, and by profession robbers. They are hardy, brave, and proud; at the same time, faithless, cunning, and treacherous. Patriotic and full of pride of race, yet they will not scruple to betray for gold their nearest relations. They are extremely bigoted, entirely controlled by their priests, and at all times ready for a *jehad*. The Pathan never forgives an injury, and has a good many scores against us to be wiped off at the first favourable opportunity. They will willingly accept our bribes, but will assuredly plunder us afterwards." (*Our Punjab Frontier*, by a Punjab official, Lahore, September 1868.)

The most powerful of the Border tribes and of those throughout Afghanistan are bound, both by the injunctions of the Koran and by solemn oaths, to stand by each other in resisting the intrusion of any infidel, *i.e.* any non-Mahomedan Power. That oath does not, however, protect any particular tribe who may have committed depredations on British territory

from retribution at our hands, provided always that such retribution does not take the form of annexation or prolonged occupation.

Looking at all these circumstances, there seems nothing to justify the assumption that the traditional character of the wild races in question could so quickly have been obliterated and transformed as Mr. Curzon has been led to believe; and it would certainly be the height of imprudence, not to say of folly, to accept their protestations, purchased by our subsidies and diplomacy, as enduring pledges of fidelity and attachment.

Then, as regards our railroad to Candahar, an impression prevails that it would remove, in a future expedition, the difficulties which caused our failure in January 1879. The impression is obviously erroneous. That the railway would materially decrease the difficulties of transport on the Indian side of Candahar there is no reason to doubt; but those difficulties were successfully overcome in all our expeditions. The obstacle to our success in January 1879 arose entirely from the impossibility of procuring food and the means of transport after we had left Candahar and advanced into the interior of the country.

Besides, if the efficiency of a future expedition is to

depend on the working of our railway, can we forget that the line, which in 1879 extended a little beyond Sibi, was partly torn up by a Border tribe as soon as the news of our defeat at Maiwand spread in the country? Can we forget that the punishment of the guilty tribe necessitated a new expedition under General MacGregor, which occupied thirty-three days, and resulted only in the partial recovery of a small fine; while the cost of the punitive expedition, the damage to the line and buildings, and the interruption in the traffic remained unretrieved?

Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the country traversed by our railway is annually exposed to excessive floods, and that the interruptions in the traffic caused thereby are neither unfrequent nor always of short duration. Let us hear what Mr. Curzon, who recently travelled on the line, says on this subject:—

"It has been a costly railway to build, a great deal of tunnelling and cutting and bridging being required. The Bolân route rejected in 1880 was suddenly determined upon in the pressure exercised by the Russian scare in 1885. Pushed forward with the haste that is born of panic, it was opened in 1887. Leaving Sibi, and crossing the plain to Rindi, it enters the famous Bolân Pass, which, throughout

the 60 miles of its length, takes the form of a defile, confined by mountain walls of uniform ruggedness. The floor is the bed of the river from which it takes its name, in the dry season a rough and stony channel, along which the rails are laid often in pools of water, but, after the rains of July and August, filled by a gross and powerful torrent that sweeps down the gorge, tearing up the sleepers and twisting the rails into extraordinary contortions. Hence the great costliness of keeping up the line, a large portion of which has to be relaid every autumn. The sullenness and sterility of the Pass can scarcely be conceived.

"From Rindi to Hirokh, a distance of 50 miles, the railroad follows the track of the river. From Hirokh to Kotal, 10 miles, the mountain walls converge, the angle of cleavage increases in abruptness, and the gorge twists in and out in sharp zig-zags. The difficulty arising from the steepness of the gradient—in many places as much as 1 in 23—and from the sharpness of the curves, induced the authorities to construct a metre gauge line through this section of the Pass, and accordingly a change of train was necessitated both at Hirokh and Kotal. A realignment of the track with the broader gauge has since been carried out between these two points, and the

Abt system of a cog-wheel catching in the teeth of a double central rail has been adopted.

"So disastrous have been the floods in the past rainy season, and such the damage wrought in the Bolân railway, that its abandonment has been seriously discussed and may ultimately be realized, as soon as a railway through the Gumal and the Zhob valley to Pishin is ready to supply its place.

"From Quetta the railroad has been extended to the foot of the Khojak Pass, and a tunnel 4,000 yards in length has been driven through the mountain, emerging at Chaman, 60 miles from Candahar. A sufficient supply of rails for the extension to the latter place is stored in Pishin."

It would thus appear that the ill-advised selection of the Bolân Pass for the construction of a railway was due to the Russian scare of 1879, and the completion of that line to a similar scare in 1885. On both occasions, as we soon afterwards perceived, the panic was groundless; and when we look at the disastrous result of the late war, which was likewise initiated under a policy conceived in an unwarrantable fear of Russia, and carried out under the influence of illusory hopes and panics, it is but reasonable to apprehend that that policy, if persisted in, will lead in the future to much the same results

as those it produced in the past, namely, errors and disappointments. Indeed, the policy of 1876, which avowedly aimed at the safety of our Empire, has very seriously impaired the security which our Indian frontier previously possessed. This will best be seen from the following passage of Lieut.-Col. Osborn's paper, which has already been mentioned :—

"The objects of this war were threefold. The primary object was to establish permanently a British officer as Envoy at Câbul. It must be plain to the dullest comprehension that, unless we are prepared to march periodically to Câbul to avenge the murder of our Envoy, this object must be relinquished. The second object was to obtain on our north-west frontier a 'strong, friendly and independent Afghânistân.' During the life-time of Sher A'li we had such an Afghânistân. This war converted it into a country filled from end to end with a righteous and burning hatred of the British name and the British nation. The third object was to acquire a 'scientific frontier.' I have shown at the beginning of this pamphlet that the old frontier of India was so strong that a stronger can hardly be imagined. By the acquisition of the so-called 'scientific frontier,' what we have done is to shorten the distance which an invading army would have to traverse by four hundred miles of

desert country. This, however, is not the worst evil of the new condition of things. Our permanent presence within the boundaries of Afghânistân will keep alive and increase the hostile feelings which our unprovoked invasion has excited among the people; and, as a measure of self-defence, we shall be compelled sooner or later to occupy the whole country, and then we shall be confronted by that 'greatest danger' which I mentioned at the beginning of this pamphlet. The frontier of our Indian Empire will be conterminous with that of a great military power beyond it. It will be in the power of Russia, by assembling a few thousand men on the Oxus, to convulse our Indian Empire whenever she pleases, from one end to the other. The escape from all these evils is to return to the policy advocated by those men who predicted every mischief which has ensued from our abandonment of it."

Before closing this chapter I would beg of the reader to peruse one more extract from Lieut.-Col. Osborn's paper, as it presents, in a concise and clear form, the chief impediments to success which meet an invading army in Afghanistan; impediments which we encountered on every occasion and were never able to surmount.

"The enormous difficulty of carrying out a suc-

cessful campaign in Afghânistân is due to two causes; and as these would operate as effectually to check the advance of an invader from Central Asia, it will be worth while to state them in some detail. The first cause is the absence of any combined resistance. Attacking the Afghân tribes is like making sword-thrusts into the water. You meet with no resistanec, but you also do no injury. The tribes harass the communications of an invading army; they cut off straggling parties; they plunder baggage; they give the troops no rest; but they carefully avoid a decisive action. The invading force moves wherever it pleases; but it never holds more of the country than the ground on which it is actually encamped. Each separate tribe is, as it were, an independent centre of life, which requires a separate and special operation for its extinction. The consequence is that the only way in which we could hope to enforce our authority throughout Afghânistân would be by a simultaneous occupation of the entire country; and seeing that the country is as large as France, very sparsely populated, and quite incapable of feeding a large army, such an occupation is simply impossible. The other great difficulty is that there is hardly any forage in Afghânistân, and consequently the transport train of an invading army cannot fail to be crippled

after a few weeks of active service. The moment that such a catastrophe is consummated an army in the field becomes as cumbersome and useless as a swan on a turnpike road. This latter difficulty it was which compelled the Government to make the treaty of Gandamak."

CHAPTER X.

Conclusion.

Taking into consideration the various circumstances mentioned in the foregoing pages, it would be childish to assume that increased facilities of transport merely to the borders of the Amir's territories would, in a future expedition, remove those serious difficulties which crippled our armies when they had penetrated into the heart of the country; which prevented them, after every successful action, from reaping the fruit of their victory, and which ultimately compelled them to leave the country with loss of dignity and without attaining the object which they were sent to accomplish.

Unless, therefore, the costly preparations which are now being made for a third invasion of Afghanistan be stopped, and the enigmatic scheme of a "scientific

frontier" be discarded, and replaced by a policy resting on rational principles and the experience we so dearly bought, the nation must be prepared for fresh disasters and humiliations.

The tribes and the land of Afghanistan have remained what they were in 1880; and if improved implements of war and newly invented contrivances have added to our power for attack, the Afghans have not been slow in increasing their means of defence.

The broad lines of our policy should be drawn, not on the suggestions of irresponsible persons, nor on the shifting tactics of the last campaign, but in accordance with the opinions of those high authorities who, while charged with the safety of our Indian Empire, expressed, under official responsibility, the views they had formed regarding the defence of our north-western frontier, and regarding the line of conduct which should be followed towards our neighbours the Afghans—of men like Lords Magdala, Lawrence, Mayo, and Sandhurst. Small differences may have divided them regarding details in special circumstances; but their principles of action were the same, and their general policy, reviewed in the light of subsequent events, has been clearly traced by Earl Grey in a letter which was published in the

Times in March 1887, the following passage in which may usefully be transcribed here:—

"I entirely concur in the opinion that the policy of seeking to ensure the safety of our Indian Empire by measures for checking the increase of Russian power in Central Asia is quite a mistaken one. From so long ago as the year 1838, when the adoption of this policy led to the first Afghan war, I have always held that the chief danger to our Indian Empire was from within, not from without. Hence, I have uniformly maintained that our great object ought to be to diminish, as much as possible, the burthen of taxation, and to promote the welfare of the Indian people. If in this manner we could improve the condition of our subjects, and give them reason to be satisfied with British rule, it seemed to me that we had little to fear from attacks from without.

"Still, of late years, when Russia has been extending her influence nearer and nearer to our frontier, I have never denied that we ought to do all we can to guard that frontier from attack; but I have considered that there can be no greater mistake than, for this purpose, to take measures founded on the assumption that, if Russia should attempt to attack us, or to assist any of the half-civilized tribes

of Asia in doing so, it would be expedient to meet such attacks at a distance from our own dominions and resources, instead of waiting for them on our own frontier. I believe that, by creating the means of rapidly moving an overwhelming force to any point of our frontier which might be the object of attack, we might have an assurance of being able speedily to destroy any hostile force that might be brought against us; and that, if the money which has been spent in needless wars had, on the contrary, been used in making railways along our frontiers, with two or three fortified posts where a force could be assembled in readiness to attack any enemy as soon as he appeared on our borders, perfect security might have been obtained against any attack that could possibly have been made on our dominions, either by Russian troops or by Asiatics assisted and directed by Russians.

"The only way in which Russia could really, as I think, injure us, is by creating an impression on the minds of some of the Indian population within our own dominions, that we are afraid of Russia, and that she really does possess the means of giving effectual military support to any of the subjects of the Indian Empire who may think they have reason to be dissatisfied with our rule. What is called the

"forward frontier policy" of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury was calculated to increase that, the only danger that is not imaginary, which India has to fear from Russia.

"Mr. Gladstone also, by the language he used in moving for the vote of credit to make preparations for war after the Russian attack on the Afghans at Penjdeh in 1885, and then allowing the Russians to retain all they had gained by this attack without giving any redress to the Afghans, has contributed even more to encourage among the people of India a belief in the power of Russia, and in its being an object of dread to ourselves. If the British Government had, from the first, not only professed, but shown by its acts, indifference to the proceedings of Russia in Central Asia, their proceedings would have done us no harm; it is only our showing ourselves to be afraid of their effects that has made them really mischievous.

"I am persuaded that the only wise policy for this country to pursue is to keep absolutely aloof from all the quarrels of the Afghans and our other neighbours, and to avoid all meddling in their affairs, unless, by plundering our subjects or by other acts, they inflict upon us injuries which ought to be promptly punished. Even Lord Lawrence, wise as

his conduct generally was, did not abstain, as strictly as I should have wished, from interference in the affairs of the Afghans, but made himself too decidedly the partisan of the Ameer, giving him arms and money. The British authorities cannot support the ruler of the Afghans for the time being without giving offence to all his competitors; and as it is in the nature of the half-barbarous States of Asia to be never long free from revolutions, their rulers are never secure from falling. The fall of one who has been supported by the Indian Government, which may take place at any moment, will have the appearance of a reverse to that Government."

CHAPTER XI.

The Financial Question.

The financial question connected with the "Scientific Frontier," though of primary importance to its execution, has never been discussed by its advocates and supporters; and judging from what has transpired of the scheme, the question appears to be incapable of any definite or satisfactory solution. The initiative steps involved a war which cost twenty millions sterling; and a like sum has been expended in acquiring territory in Baluchistan, in constructing the Scind-Pishin railway and protective military works, and in subsidising the Amir and a number of tribal chieftains. But only a small portion of the scheme has as yet been put forward. Surveys have been made for a railway from Peshawur through the Khyber Pass to Landi Kotal; and an alternative line through the Michni Pass towards Cabul, as well as railways from Attock to Khushalgarh, Kalabagh, and

Bannu, and from Mianwali to Kalabagh, are under consideration. Then, the railway through the Bolan Pass, being found unfit for its intended purpose, is to be abandoned and replaced by a line through the Gumal Pass and the Zhob country, to Pishin. Moreover, with the view of guarding against a descent from Turkestan in the direction taken by the Russian exploring column of 1878, surveys have been made for connecting Gilgit with our existing system of military railroads; it being asserted that, without such a line, our defences would be incomplete and the Empire would not be safe from invasion.

A reference to the map will show that the total length of these projected lines is over 800 miles. No estimate of their cost has been made public; but looking at the difficult nature of the ground, and taking into account the necessity of protecting these new lines, twenty millions would certainly fall considerably short of the cost of this section of the projected works. But the "Scientific Frontier" would even then be incomplete. Great stress has been laid on the strategic importance of Bannu, as commanding an ingress *viâ* Thall to Afghanistan and Cabul; and of the Kuram and Tochi valleys, as offering the means of swiftly moving troops to Ghazni. This part of the scheme will, therefore, in

its turn require railways, protective fortifications, and probably also subsidies to the local tribes.

Still, the "Scientific Frontier" would remain unfinished, seeing that, in the original plan considered by the authorities in India in 1868, the occupation of Jellalabad as commanding the position of Cabul, was a main feature of the scheme; and the possession of Candahar has moreover been declared to be an essential condition of success.

Money must be found for the construction of all these works, and also for their maintenance, seeing that military railroads do not earn even their working expenses. Additional troops will likewise have to be raised, for garrisoning the outposts and protecting the different lines of this gigantic and undefined scheme. Whence is that money to come? During the last fifteen years the Indian treasury has, by means of loans raised on the security of the Indian revenue, supplied the forty millions hitherto expended; can it reasonably be expected to produce the countless millions still wanted?

The credit of the Indian Government in the Money Market in London is, no doubt, excellent; and the Secretary of State could borrow many millions at present by pledging the revenues of India. But the interest on the new loans would have to be provided

for, and this leads at once to the question, whether the Indian revenue is capable of bearing such additional and unlimited burdens. On this point it may be as well to remember how, through ill-regulated expenditure, the Indian Exchequer was brought in 1869 on the very verge of bankruptcy. The situation cannot be better described than in the oft-repeated words of the late Lord Mayo, when he wrote in 1870 :—"An accumulated deficit of six millions has occurred in the three last years; the permanent debt during the same period has been increased by nearly six and a half millions; the serious and unprecedented course of increasing the burdens of the people in the middle of the year has been taken; the public works have in a great measure been suspended; the income tax and the salt tax in Madras and Bombay have been increased; the Government have declined to terrify the people by new taxes, and has endeavoured to extricate the Empire from a very great difficulty, by the only mode which it thought it could venture to adopt; the period has been one of great trouble to the Empire and of anxiety to the Government." A few months later the Viceroy wrote again :—"A feeling of discontent and dissatisfaction exists among every class, both European and Native, on account of the increase

of taxation that has for years been going on; and the continuance of that feeling is a political danger the magnitude of which can hardly be over-estimated."

Let us now inquire into the present condition of the finances of India. The estimates just published for 1891–92 show a small surplus of Rx. 115,600, contingent on the rate of exchange—ruling, on an average, at 1s. 5¼d. per rupee. So far, however, the market rate has ruled below that figure, and the prospect for the remainder of the year is decidedly unfavourable, in view of the heavy stock of silver which has accumulated in America. The above-mentioned surplus may, therefore, eventually be converted into a deficit, even if the estimates in all other respects be fully realised; but this latter contingency likewise seems improbable for the following reasons.

The income derived from opium, which very materially contributes to the revenue, has been decreasing steadily during the last ten years. The nett amount was—

Rx. 8,451,167 in 1880–81,

Rx. 6,213,845 in 1886–87,

and is estimated at only

Rx. 5,318,700 for 1891–92;

and the Finance Minister records the following observation in reference to these figures:—"The opium

the safety of our Indian Empire, which would be far greater than any that can reasonably be apprehended from a Russian attack through Afghanistan, namely, the internal danger of dissaffection and rebellion.

"The first essential to the preservation of India against the attacks of a foreign enemy," said an able and experienced officer of the Indian Army,* "is that the Government of India should be so conducted as to make it a matter of moral certainty that, in the event of any other European Power attempting to oust us from it, there shall be no internal uprising to paralyse the military movements which the authorities may consider, on strategic grounds, the best calculated for its defence. If, like France in her last contest with Germany, we have to deal not only with the enemy in front of us, but also with revolutionary or rebellious upheavings in our rear, the ablest plan of action may, and probably will, prove utterly useless, because it will be found impossible to adhere to it in this new state of things."

* *The True Line of Defence for India*, by Col. A. B. Rathborne. East India Association, 1876.

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